FROM INVISIBILITY TO AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: AFRO-ARGENTINES IN CONTEMPORARY ARGENTINA

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ABSTRACT

This research studies the activities of Afro-Argentine organizations regarding affirmative action policy formulation in Argentina focusing on the context, key factors, developments, and opinions of the stakeholders. The study builds upon the hypothesis that current cultural activities and political pressure groups of the Afro Community in Buenos Aires, Argentina are lobbying for and having a positive effect on affirmative action policy planning in Argentina at the present time. Research on this topic is important not only for understanding how affirmative action gains importance on the public and government agendas in Argentina, but also in the broader context of political agenda setting and interest group agency, potentially for other Afro-descendant groups in the rest of Latin America and the world. The method rests on semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and activists of the most important Afro-Argentine civil society organizations in Argentina, based in Buenos Aires city as well as suburban Buenos Aires. The Afro-Argentine community is achieving agenda setting and affirmative action policy formulation through seeking historical and cultural recognition, using opportunities that arise from globalization, the rise of multiculturalism and government openness, and employing cultural and rights-based approaches to position themselves. The study finds that, in spite of the group’s invisibility, the state is appropriating the strategies and receiving affirmative action proposals in the form of compensatory policies, individual-type (antidiscrimination) and collective (upward mobility and equal opportunity) measures. Antidiscrimination measures and compensatory
policies of recognition have been implemented; however there is no evidence of the existence of the more substantial “quota” collective-type policies. The organizations are in the process of proposing these. The research also finds that discrimination and whitening persist, and identifies tensions both in the definitions of a general Afro-Argentine identity and the debate over equality and difference by the Afro community in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Judging from proposals that have not yet made it onto the government agenda, and the stakeholders’ pessimism and doubt on the successful passing of affirmative action policy, it remains unclear whether Argentina will move beyond recognition and antidiscrimination measures in the near future.
If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a megalopolis to raise a thesis candidate. This paper would not exist at all if it weren’t for a very large group of people who have supported me, encouraged me, advised me, fed me, contained me, read and edited/commented my work, and simply believed in me when I did not.

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Table of Contents

Foreword .................................................................................................................................................. 1
Introduction ............................................................................................................................................... 2
1. Historical and Theoretical Considerations ....................................................................................... 6
  1.1 Understanding Afro-Argentina: Origins, Exclusion, and Community ........................................ 6
      The Term Afro-descendant .................................................................................................................. 6
      From Slavery to Emancipation ......................................................................................................... 7
      African Influences in Argentina ....................................................................................................... 15
      Racism and Othering: Concepts, Invisibilization, Whitening, and Mestizaje in Argentina ...... 21
      Racism ............................................................................................................................................... 22
      Race, Class, and Inequality ................................................................................................................. 25
      Mestizaje .......................................................................................................................................... 28
      Invisibilization and Whitening through Mestizaje as a Form of Racism ................................... 30
      Racism in Argentina ......................................................................................................................... 34
      Multicultural Citizenship and Afro-Argentines .............................................................................. 43
      The Impulse of Durban 2001 .......................................................................................................... 49
      Constructions of Identity ................................................................................................................. 53
  1.2. Making it Matter and Making it Count: Agenda Setting and Affirmative Action ................ 57
      Agenda Setting: Theoretical Overview ........................................................................................... 57
      Affirmative Action: Concepts, Types, Controversy, and Examples ......................................... 61
      Affirmative Action Explained ......................................................................................................... 61
      The Origins of Affirmative Action .................................................................................................. 63
      Controversy ..................................................................................................................................... 70
      Some Country Examples ............................................................................................................... 76
      Anti-discrimination and Affirmative Action in Argentina .......................................................... 88
      The Afro-Argentine Community’s Moves Towards Visibility .................................................. 96
2. Afro-Argentine Organizations and Affirmative Action .................................................................... 98
  2.1. The Afro-Argentine Organizations ............................................................................................ 98
      Description of the Organizations ................................................................................................. 103
      Racism and Discrimination ........................................................................................................... 112
      The importance of education on history and culture ................................................................. 114
Identity ................................................................. ................................................................. 116
View of the Government and Politics ................................................................. 119
Policy: Successes and Shortcomings ................................................................. 124
Approach to Legislation and Rights ................................................................. 128
Gender Issues ........................................................................................................... 130
Additional Organizations ...................................................................................... 131
2.2. Affirmative Advances ...................................................................................... 132
A Policy Blueprint: APOAA’s Youth Conference and Assembly .......................... 132
Reaching out to the State ......................................................................................... 143
  Partnering with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs .................................................. 143
  Partnering with the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security .......... 145
  Regularization of Migrants from Senegal and the Dominican Republic ............ 146
  Commemoration and Recognition: Afro-Argentine and African Culture Day and Paseo de las Tres Culturas ................................................................. 147
3. Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 149
Bibliography ........................................................................................................... 164
Foreword

This research paper on affirmative action for Afro-Argentines began, as most research does, with existential questions. Cheesy as it may be to say it, I’m a UN child, so multiculturalism was the air that I breathed every single day at school, during extracurricular activities, at every birthday party and every playdate. Being confronted with others who were different, and thinking about my own difference, was a daily exercise, but always with an emphasis that in spite of all those variations in cultures, languages, colors, experiences, essentially we were all the same. One community, one world. Sappy, right?

I’m writing this because after all the privilege and corniness, I believe this background shaped my thinking and curiosity. First, there’s the idea that difference and sameness don’t have to be mutually exclusive. Second, this experience left me with an ever-present desire to know where I’m from, to retrace the many migrations of the different branches of my family, to give an easy straightforward answer to the question “where are you from.” I’m slowly starting to understand that this is a lifelong venture. And lastly, it made me curious about the movement of people, about diaspora, about migration. Through the experiences of my family, I was always in intense contact with the Hungarian diaspora, as my grandparents were part of this great movement of Hungarians to other parts of the world, in this case Argentina. The country literally received them with open arms, like it did so many other migrants and refugees. The ties of the Hungarian community in Argentina – la colectividad húngara – with Hungary continue to be very strong, with an emphasis on preserving language, tradition, history, nationalism, ancestry. Then there’s the Polish community, the Russian, Armenian, German, Swiss, Italian, Spanish, and so many others.
One caught my attention in particular: the Afro-Argentine community, one that is often dismissed. Why was it not given the same place as the other communities I mentioned, as having built up this country? Especially considering an important part of that community was here long before any of the others, and considering the legacy of slavery? What was specific about the different moments of the African diaspora to Argentina, and why was it shrouded in so much mystery? What dynamics led to the upsurge of the community in the past few years, and how is it organizing to gain rights and recognition? How does this look in terms of policy? These questions motivated me search for some explanations.

**Introduction**

This research studies the activities of Afro-Argentine organizations regarding affirmative action policy formulation and its environment in Argentina in order to find out the context, key factors, developments, and opinions of the stakeholders. The investigation aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on public policy and Afro-descendants in Argentina by exploring and gaining a better understanding of the mechanisms of grassroots “visibilization” strategies and agenda insertion by stakeholders, in what way this agenda is present at the state level, and what the implications for affirmative action are, so that future minority and state agenda setting may benefit from this example.

The present study builds upon the hypothesis that the Afro community in Buenos Aires, Argentina has reappeared recently until the culmination of this paper in 2014, and that current cultural activities and political pressure groups are lobbying for and having a positive effect on affirmative action policy formulation in Argentina at the present time.
Through seeking historical and cultural recognition, aiming for a break with the way Argentine history is perceived and taught, and by using a constellation of opportunities created by globalization, the minority rights revolution, the rise of multiculturalism, and government openness, Afro-Argentine groups are employing a combination of cultural and rights-based approaches to position themselves and are succeeding in setting an agenda, having yet to articulate demands with more agreement among stakeholders.

In spite of a long tradition of invisibility, as the investigation shows, the state is appropriating and accepting the visibilization strategies of the Afro-descendant organizations in their effort to formulate affirmative action policies. This has two sides: on the one hand, the agency and activities of organizations carried out over the course of the years, and on the other, the openness of the state to these themes through multicultural, globalization, and minority rights processes.

The research finds that recognition of the contributions of African descendants to the edification of Argentina is understood as a form of compensatory affirmative action, and that the proposed policies reflect both individual-type (antidiscrimination) and collective-type (upward mobility, equal opportunity) measures. While there is evidence of two laws recognizing Afro-Argentines (African-Argentine Culture Day on October 11th as a provincial law of Buenos Aires province, and Afro-Argentine and Afro Culture Day on November 8th as a national law), there is no evidence of the implementation of the more substantial collective-type policies. So far, these have been proposed through a network of organizations, the APOAA (Permanent Assembly of Afro-Descendant Organizations of Argentina) and presented to the Ministry of Social Development.
While there is fertile ground for affirmative action formulation and implementation, racial discrimination and whitening are found to persist today. The tensions in the definitions of a general “Afro” identity and the underlying debate over equality and difference can be identified in current policy formulation discussions among the organizations.

These dynamics have implications for future Afro-Latin American agenda setting methods using equality or difference arguments with the goal of different types of affirmative action, and for minority rights agenda setting in general, in the face of challenges involving methods of gaining and maintaining state attention. In order for a more equal society to be possible, it is essential to keep working, and to continue exploring ways to reach that goal for all communities.

This investigation is an exploratory study that aims to clarify policy processes by conducting semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and activists of the most important Afro-Argentine civil society organizations in Argentina, based in Buenos Aires city as well as suburban Buenos Aires, an area with a high concentration of active organizations but also designated due to the limited scope and time. The organizations interviewed were Asociación Misibamba, Movimiento Afrocultural, Agrupación Xangó, Asociación Civil África y su Diáspora, Asociación Civil ONIRA, Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos “Unión Caboverdeana,” and The Argentine Institute for Equality, Diversity and Integration (IARPIDI).

While there is extensive research on the history of slavery in Argentina, what happened to the Afro-Argentines, and identity constructions in a context of “invisibilization” and mestizaje (racial mixing), research on the policy and politics side is only just emerging, on tracking the organizations’ moves and how they function. Research on this topic is important not only for
understanding and mapping the intricacies of how affirmative action is climbing the rungs of the public and government agendas in Argentina, but also in the broader context of political agenda setting and interest group agency, potentially for other Afro-descendant groups in the rest of Latin America and the world. This research aims to contribute to this particular policy field, to show this “moment in history” of where Afro-descendants in Argentina stand with respect to these very specific types of activities.

The paper is organized as follows: the first part provides historical and theoretical considerations divided into two general sections; Section 1.1. gives a general overview of the history of African slavery in Argentina as well as the influences Africans have brought to the country. The issue of racism is addressed in detail, with subsections dedicated to forms of racism specific to Latin America and Argentina: these are *mestizaje*, the relationship between race and class, invisibilization, and whitening. The section also examines multicultural citizenship and the politics of equality versus difference, the significance of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban in 2001, and as a confluence of all of the above, constructions of identity particular to the African diaspora in general and in Argentina.

The following section 1.2. looks in detail at agenda setting theories and affirmative action, detailing its origins, types, international examples and those present in Argentina, with a brief overview of the demographic characteristics of the Afro-descendant community in Argentina.

The second part includes descriptions of the organizations and results. Section 2.1 focuses on the organizations themselves, their activities, and their viewpoints, salient themes related to
identity, discrimination, and policy. Section 2.2 explores in detail the policy proposals and activities that organizations and activists engage in. Finally, the third and last part provides an analysis of the organizations and results taking theoretical considerations into account, closing the research with conclusions.

1. Historical and Theoretical Considerations

1.1 Understanding Afro-Argentina: Origins, Exclusion, and Community

The Term Afro-descendant

In this paper I will be using the terms Afro-Argentine and Afro-descendant interchangeably. As we will see later on, within the larger community, those Afro-Argentines who are descendants of slaves differentiate themselves by using the reference “colonial trunk” (tronco colonial); I will point out this difference if I am referring to this part of the community. The term “afro-descendant” (afrodescendiente) is a rather new term, coined in the last decade or so, which is supposed to encompass a broad group of people of African descent. It began to gain traction prior to the United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa in 2001, at which point it was proposed by members of Afro groups who were present, and was subsequently agreed upon (López, 2006; Ocoró Loango, 2012; García, 2013). Since then it has been more frequently used by social organizations to refer to the said population, but it has not necessarily gained popular use among blacks (Ocoró Loango, 2012, p. 6). The expression “afro-descendant”, by not specifying nationality, allows the reference to encompass a broad and inclusive group of people, thus Afro-Argentines, Afro-Uruguayans, Afro-Brazilians, Afro-Ecuadorians and others can form a single unit of representation (Frigerio & Lamborghini, 2011b, p. 30). López (2006) actually
points out that even though the term “afro-descendant” was agreed upon, it generated heated debates among stakeholders and activists as to who fits into that category (p. 110), specifically referring to local Afro-Argentines, and other people of African descent living in Argentina.

As García (2013) writes, the term universally accepted today by international organizations, because the term “negro” in Spanish is reframed to include the reference to ancestry rather than phenotypical characteristics. The articles 13, 14, and 32-35 from the Durban Declaration of 2001 where the first time the term was used in a document recognized by U.N. countries recognizing them as “people of African descent” (Declaration of Durban, 2001; García, 2013; López, 2006, 2010b).

From Slavery to Emancipation

The following section provides an overview of key characteristics of the slave era in the Americas and specifically in Argentina, drawing from the work of historians who studied slavery such as Drescher (2009) and Schmidt-Nowara (2011), focusing on the global as well as Latin American slave trade, and Studer (1958), Crespi (2001), Carmona (2001), Sáenz Quesada (2001), Andrews (1989, 2004), and Robledo (2010), Brunelli (1952) and Rossi (1926) on history pertaining to Argentina.

According to Drescher (2009, p. 6), historians studying slavery distinguish between “societies with slaves” and “slave societies” in order to understand the development of slavery. Societies with slaves kept slaves in smaller numbers (for instance in households), whereas in slave societies, the dominant class depended more broadly on slave labor, as for example in the operation of plantations. Even though for our present purposes in this section we will be focusing on human trafficking from Africa to the American continent in a specific time frame (for four
centuries from the mid-15th century to the mid-19th century), we must bear in mind that slavery has existed in what Drescher (2009) refers to as the “Old World” (large parts of Africa, Asia and the Mediterranean) for longer than in the “New World,” (the Americas). In fact, slavery subsisted in Africa, Asia and the Mediterranean until the 20th century (p. 7) and also within certain societies through the taking of captives through conflicts in Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa (pp. 18-19).

In the case of African slaves brought by force to Latin America between the early 1500s and late 1800s, figures differ due to differences in records (and a lack of records in many cases). Nevertheless, historians estimate that about 10.7 million (Schmidt-Nowara, 2011, p. 5), or roughly between 12 and 15 million (Robledo, 2010, p. 43) African slaves were brought to Latin America in that period. The largest numbers were taken to Brazil, Cuba, and Venezuela by the Portuguese, Spanish, and British colonial powers to cover predominantly plantation-type labor demands in the New World in the production of sugar cane, coffee, and tobacco, Brazil being the “most constant and most massive importer of enslaved Africans” during that time (Schmidt-Nowara, 2011, p. 5).

The horrific conditions under which slaves were made to travel over sea and land in colonial times have been widely studied and recounted: they had to endure forced labor and cruel and inhuman punishment. Often slaves faced death arising not only from disease and overwork on plantations, but also from capital punishment. After having experienced the traumas of war and capture in their respective homelands in Africa, slaves were packed in extremely cramped and tight spaces in the holds of ships that sailed what is known as the Middle Passage, the crossing of the Atlantic to the Americas. Diseases and epidemics attributable to malnutrition and
crowding were rampant on ships, as slaves were given very little food and water, and often thrown overboard if they were found to be sick (Andrews, 2004; Robledo, 2010; Schmidt-Nowara, 2011). Causes of death while at sea were illnesses such as malaria, yellow fever, gastrointestinal disease, scurvy, smallpox, as well as suicide (Schmidt-Nowara, p. 33).

As a response to the widespread horrible conditions of life under these circumstances, slaves developed various forms of resistance by banding together even across ethnic lines to instigate rebellions, establish free slave communities in remote areas called palenques or cumbes in Spanish, and quilombos or mocambos in Portuguese, where runaway slaves were known as *cimarrones* (Andrews, 2004), and sang the widely known songs of protest named *jongos* in Brazil (Schmidt-Nowara, 2011, p. 161). Rebellions by slaves in the Americas were common in the 1500s, declined in the 1600s as a result of higher control by the Spanish and Portuguese colonists, yet increased once again in the 1700s and intensified in the 1800s (Andrews, 2004, p. 37).

Even though abolitionist ideas – that held, for example, that one should not enslave one’s own fellow believer except in regions of greater cultural and religious diversity – had already begun to circulate well before the 1400s and 1500s during the expansion of Christianity and Islam (Drescher, 2009, p. 20), a substantial abolitionist movement took several more centuries to gain wider acceptance, as its “development was very uneven” (p. 458). In the Americas, slavery was abolished at different stages: abolition was decreed first in Chile (1823), and subsequently extended to Central America (1824), Mexico (1829, except for Texas where the trade was still expanding), Uruguay (1842), Ecuador and Bolivia (1851), Colombia (1852), Argentina, (1853),
Venezuela and Peru (1854), and Paraguay (1869) (Andrews, 2004, p. 57). Last to abolish were Cuba (1886) and Brazil (1888) (Schmidt-Nowara, 2011).

Turning to the Rio de la Plata region (also known in English as the River Plate) specifically, the situation was similar in many ways to the rest of the continent, but presented some differences in the nature of the trade, numbers of slaves trafficked, and the type of labor slaves were utilized for. Slaves were brought to the River Plate region mostly from Angola, Congo and Mozambique (Andrews, 1989, pp. 35-56), but a significant number of slaves originated from West Africa and especially Guinea (Sáenz Quesada, 2001, p. 117). In his commentary introducing Rossi’s 1926 book, Horacio Jorge Becco writes that the Bantu people had the greatest influence in the River Plate area, while Brazil and Cuba were more influenced by the Congo and Angola people (p. 15).

Shipping records (Studer, 1958, p. 323) show that approximately half of the slaves who made the journey to the River Plate region arrived via Brazil and the other half arrived directly from Africa through the Portuguese slave trade. Portuguese and Spanish slave traders were not the only ones involved in this endeavor: in 1701, the French-owned Royal Guinea Company was granted a monopoly or license (“asiento”) to import slaves through the port of Buenos Aires, which remained in effect until 1713. That same year, the British South Sea Company received a license in connection with the Treaty of Utrecht; this license remained in force until 1748 (Sáenz Quesada, 2001, p. 118), when general free trade was decreed by Spain just after Spain had founded the Viceroyalty of Peru (Romero, 2013, pp. 38-39).

In the region that is now Argentina, the illegal trade of goods and slaves was common in the early colonial period from the 1550s through the 1600s, in spite of Spain’s efforts to impose
licensing on this trade (Studer, 1958; Andrews 1989; Sáenz Quesada, 2001). In fact, while the trafficking of slaves through the port of Buenos Aires was illegal, this port was also an important point of transit for slaves forcibly assembled to extract silver and precious metals in the mines of Potosí (present-day Peru), Lima and what is today the northeast region of Argentina. Lima was the closest seat authorized by the Spanish crown for the trade of goods including African slaves (Crespi, 2001). The high demand for new slaves in the region reflected a sharp decline in the local indigenous populations enslaved by the Spanish due to disease, mistreatment and exploitation and who also, according to numerous reports of the time, were not considered to be as strong as Africans (Robledo, 2010, p. 34).

As for numbers, it is difficult to pinpoint an exact figure of slaves brought to the River Plate region during the colonial period. Historians place numbers somewhere between 98,000 (Schmidt-Nowara, 2011, p. 7) and 300,000 (Robledo, 2010, p. 53) between the mid-1500s and the mid-1800s. One of the earliest and most cited censuses regarding the number of blacks in Argentina, the 1778 census, shows that the population of blacks and mulattoes in Argentina’s northeast region, at that prosperous and booming period, numbered roughly 55,700 out of a total population of 126,000, only 11,410 of whom were slaves (Sáenz Quesada, 2001, p. 119). Specifically in Buenos Aires, this same census showed that just under 30% of the population of Buenos Aires was Afro-Argentine (7,256 out of 24,363). According to Carmona (2001, p. 370) however, the census reveals that blacks reached 60% of the total population of the northern province of Tucumán, that is to say modern-day Córdoba, Santiago del Estero, la Rioja, Catamarca, San Miguel, Salta, Jujuy, and today’s Tucumán, while the regions of then Cuyo (which includes modern day Mendoza, San Luis and San Juan) had an Afro-Argentine
population of just over 20%. Similarly, the Afro-descendant population for the provinces of Corrientes, Entre Ríos, and Santa Fe also represented about 20% of the total population (Carmona, 2001, p. 370). Carmona in fact puts the total percentage of Afro-descendants in all of Argentina at 46% at the time of the census (92,000 out of 200,000 people) showing some discrepancies in population numbers from Sáenz Quesada’s research, yet still reflecting a similar proportion of the total population.

Upon arrival in Buenos Aires, slaves were first placed in barracks in modern-day San Telmo, and in a procedure similar to the rest of the Americas, they were painfully branded with a red hot iron with what was called the “carimba,” after which most of them were sold on markets and shipped off to other cities where labor demand was abundant (mostly to the country’s interior, the mines of Potosí in modern-day Perú, but also Lima and Chile) (Crespi, 2001; Robledo, 2010; Sáenz Quesada, 2001). At first, African slaves arrived in the River Plate region as the Spaniards’ servants and confidantes, and later came to work in different occupations (which will be detailed in the next paragraph). These slaves even worked for religious orders such as the Jesuits, who also owned slaves and proceeded to convert them to Christianity (ibid, p. 115-117). Generally, slaves in the River Plate region strived to keep their original traditions and religious rituals (such as the *candombe*[^1]) alive while at the same time adopting Christianity; for example, they specifically revered Saint Balthazar of the Three Kings as well as San Benito de Palermo, a moor (Sáenz Quesada, 2001; Rossi, 1926).

[^1]: Candombe is a form of music that is sung, danced, and played on drums, originated from African slaves, and declared a world heritage of Uruguay (UNESCO, 2014) but since it originated in the River Plate region, it is also native to Brazil and Argentina where it is still practiced (Cirio, 2010). The candombe practice begins around a fire to warm up the hides of the drums and tune them; then a parade can form, led by a member of the group or community, and the players sing and play while dancers accompany them (UNESCO, 2014). It is recognized as “an expression of resistance” of people of African descent in this region (UNESCO, 2014).
Unlike other regions where slaves were forced to work in plantations, those brought to Argentina were assigned other tasks. The women had to work as “maids, cleaning ladies, cooks, nannies” and the men were “artisans, construction workers, musicians, bakers, barbers, shoemakers, sailors, bricklayers, and even (...) ant extermination specialists” (Studer, 1958, p. 330). In those cases where slaves were used for agricultural labor and cattle ranching, they were considered to be gauchos (p. 331). By the mid-1700s, the average number of African descendant household slaves and servants per household in Buenos Aires was about four (Sáenz Quesada, 2001, p. 119).

The aforementioned activities may sound benign. However, although historians point out that life as a slave in colonial Argentina was more bearable than in other parts of the vast Americas in that, in other regions such as the Caribbean and the southern U.S.A., slaves were subject to cruel treatment on plantations (Robledo, 2010, p. 12), we also know that punishments for deviations, escape, or any other behavior deemed as insubordination, were severe and included extreme whippings and even hanging (Brunelli, 1941, pp. 103-104).

The “golden age” of slavery and forced labor was destined not to last. In the second half of the 18th century, the Spanish monarchy began to experience a decline in their hold over colonial centers. To remedy this, Spain started encouraging in the 1780s the trade of both goods and slaves by removing the monopoly system and allowing free trade in the New World in what was called the “Black Code” of 1789. This concession explains the intensification of trafficking in the ensuing decades; however, it failed to placate emancipatory ideas that had already taken hold (Drescher, 2009, pp. 181-184). Moreover, as the abolitionist movement increasingly spread, most countries in Spanish America began restricting the trafficking of Africans, allowing only
some local and regional trade in African slaves. Just as the previously mentioned slave-induced rebellions, this shift could also be attributed to the ideological trends of the time in North America and western Europe, of “civil equality, individual liberty, and citizenship” born of the French Civil War (Drescher, 2009, p. 186-187; Brunelli, 1941).

In this rising sentiment of independence movements in Latin America, white elites welcomed and encouraged social change, provided that it afforded them autonomy while maintaining, preferably without any conflicts, their hierarchical status in society (Drescher, 2009, p. 181). In fact, Drescher (2009) points out that the structure of society in Spanish America had an effect on how these changes and revolutions came about, being that societies were “neither overwhelmingly white and free like North America, nor overwhelmingly black and slave like the French overseas colonies” and generally blacks made up about 10% of the population across the continent except for Cuba and Brazil, where this percentage was higher (p. 181).

Already from the mid-1700s onwards, there began to emerge a growing number of freed and free slaves, as a result of being either freed by their masters for religious reasons, or having freed themselves by buying themselves out and sometimes buying off other members of their family (Sáenz Quesada, 2001, p. 120). Blacks were highly involved in the independence movements against the Spanish colonial powers across Latin America, as they were promised freedom if they fought alongside revolutionaries, and “played a crucially important role in winning independence for Spanish South America”, which started many countries on a path to emancipation (Andrews, 2004, p. 64). During the Paraguayan War, also known as the War of the Triple Alliance (of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay), Brazil recruited slaves to fight on its behalf by offering compensation to owners, thus resulting in their freedom; this effort spurred a wave of
escapes and enlistments in the Brazilian army (Andrews, 2004, p.57). In fact, Andrews writes of 4,000 to 5,000 slaves who volunteered to fight for the revolutionary forces, including about half of San Martín’s army in 1817 composed of former black slaves who secured their freedom through enlistment during the invasion of Chile (p. 62).

As a consequence, the independence revolutions were also responsible for a great decrease in black male population size because many of the men who enlisted died in the conflicts. Andrews (2004, p. 62) writes that according to censuses after the turn of the 19th century, the ratio of black men to black women between 1810 and 1827 fell from 108 to 59 for every 100 women in Buenos Aires, while in Montevideo the ratio dropped from 119 to 78 (1805-1819).

Finally, abolition in Argentina began in the early 1800s with a law of free birth2 and four decades later concluded in final constitutional abolition. While the Law of Free Birth was passed in 1813 and any further slave traffic was prohibited in Buenos Aires in 1824, the trade continued until its abolition in 1853 (Studer, 1958, p. 43).

African Influences in Argentina

In both his 1937 and 1941 books, Pereda Valdés explores and documents the presence of black characters appearing in literature in the Rio de la Plata region until the end of the Spanish golden age (end of the 1500s to end of the 1600s), and analyses mostly African superstitions, vocabulary and African influences on language spoken in the Rio de la Plata area. Rossi in Cosas de Negros (1926) describes the influential aspects of African dance, religious rituals, candombe, and tango in Argentina, while Ortiz Oderigo (1974) follows in both Rossi’s and Pereda Valdés’

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2 This law freed children born to slave parents once they turned of age, which was age 16 for women and age 18 for men (Drescher, 2009; Studer, 1958).
footsteps by further exploring elements of African cultural influences in the region. The collection of research compiled by Picotti (2001) in *El Negro En La Argentina* reveals rich and varied ways that Afro-Argentines shaped Argentina culturally, linguistically, musically, and artistically.

In terms of language, Ortiz Oderigo (1974) found more than five hundred words and expressions which come from various African languages such as Congo and Kimbundu, and also quotes Ricardo Rojas’ book *Eurindia* (1924) providing a list of still relevant words used in Argentina which have African roots, such as “tata,” “quilombo,” “tango,” “milonga,” and “mucama,” (pp. 67-69).\(^3\) Rossi (1926) in fact attributes the birth of the word “criollo”, which means loosely translated means creole, directly to the Afro-Argentines. Picotti (2001) also finds that the *payada* genre of folklore attributed to the gauchos, a poetic song form, was heavily influenced by the African oral tradition (p. 178) and she notes well-known Afro-Argentine *payadores* such as Gabino Ezeiza, Higinio D. Cazón, and Luis García (p. 181), while Rodríguez Molas (1999, 2000) and Castro (1988, 2001) show the influence of African rhythms in tango.

The influence of African foods can also still be found Argentine cuisine (Robledo, 2010) suggesting that the vegetable and meat stew *carbonada*, although attributed to the Spanish, may have been born of black farmers who used leftover produce from the farm kitchens (p. 326), and the same goes for *caldo de patas* (cow hoof stew) and *chicharrones* (pork cracklings) (p. 327).

Afro-Argentines were very active when Argentine identity was being forged. While instances of resistance and freed slave enclaves in Argentina were limited due to the smaller numbers of African descendants, it was still a strong movement (Andrews, 1989). After the

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\(^3\) Other words include *zambo, candombe, bochinche, mandinga, zamba, maní, batuque, bambula* (Ortiz Oderigo, 1974, pp. 67-69). Robledo (2010) also expands on these provides a wonderful list with definitions (pp. 327-328).
abolition of slavery in 1853, strong community alliances were formed as soon as they were allowed, and there was a general belief that strength came from unity; these alliances included religious associations, “nations” or ethnic associations which worked as mutual funds besides organizing cultural events such as traditional dances (Andrews, 1989, p. 167) even though Lewis (1996) that there is evidence of the agencies being disorganized. The high point of Afro-Argentine newspapers, periodicals, and literature was earlier than in Colombia, occurring in the late 1800s until about 1910, during which time there were at least 15 active newspapers (p. 212). Laws concerning Argentine mutual aid organizations were drawn up in 1827, which resulted in their tighter control by the government (Lewis, 1996). The societies’ obligations to the government were to use funds to free slaves, educate the young members, assist members in finding and settling in jobs, ensure proper moral conduct of all members, make yearly suffrage for the souls of the dead, and collect monthly contributions from freed members (Lewis, 1996, p. 15), which presented huge responsibilities and pressures. Since the societies could not effectively articulate their needs to the rest of society, the Afro-Argentine press picked up the slack (Lewis, 1996, p. 16).

In the historiographical research on Afro-Argentines, *Los Afroargentinos de Buenos Aires*, Andrews (1989) explores what he refers to as the disappearance of Afro-Argentines due to four factors he found recurrent in the literature: epidemics, independence wars, miscegenation, and the decline of the slave trade (pp. 10-11) and found that these explanations were only partially true. What Andrews found was that the demographic decline "is part of a larger phenomenon, which is the dimming, intentional or not, of the role of Afro-Argentines in the history of their nation" (p.12, own translation). In the Rio de la Plata region, there was a high
loss of black males due to the independence wars of the early 1800s (Pereda Valdés, 1941; Drescher, 2009) which is highlighted by the dwindling ratio of males to females in the first two decades of the 1800s (Goldberg, 1976). As mentioned earlier in this paper, there was indeed a high participation of blacks in the conflicts, as they increasingly left farms to join the army, (Abós, 2006; Pereda Valdés, 1941) lured by promises of freedom if they served (Andrews, 2004). Both high number of deaths from the conflicts of independence, as well as further mestizaje in their absence, as the most important reasons for the decline of the Afro-Argentine population in the second half of that century (Abós, 2006, pp. 142-143). However, another reason for this decline was the fact that blacks were documented less in censuses by authorities after the fall of Rosas (Abós, 2006; Andrews, 1989; Frigerio, 2000b) and therefore did not necessarily “disappear”, but were unaccounted for.

A large factor was European immigration as a result of large scale economic changes and expansion primarily in the bovine, agricultural, construction, railway, and shipping industries (Romero, 2013). Beckoning with these bright economic prospects, immigration to Argentina soared towards the end of the 19th century. The population in Argentina went from 12% of its population 1,737,000 being foreign or immigrant in 1869, to having 25% of a total of 3,959,000 inhabitants in 1895, culminating at 30% percent immigrants in 1914 (Germani, 1965; Romero, 2013) most of whom were of Spanish and Italian origin (Svampa, 2006). Other immigrant groups at the end of the 19th century were Germans, Swiss, Russian Jewish families; the French, the British and Irish immigrants continued to arrive until about the 1890s and had already established local communities, having in Argentina mostly in the first half of the 1800s (Saenz Quesada, 2001). The largest immigrant community was undoubtedly the Italian one, representing
48% of the total number of foreign residents in 1895, numbering at almost half a million (Saenz Quesada, 2001, p. 393).

Most of these immigrants stayed in and around Buenos Aires (except for some German, Swiss, Irish, and British communities who migrated to the south of the country) – as a result, the northern interior provinces remained mostly mestizo or mixed, even though a sizeable number of Syrian and Lebanese immigrants ventured north (Saenz Quesada, 2001).

Svampa also analyses immigration and the transition from immigrants being held in a positive light, to being considered “new barbarians” (p. 101-105) in the late 1880s and early 1900s.

Another wave of immigration to Argentina towards the end of the 19th century was from Cape Verde, one of the earliest from Africa. There is limited documentary research on the Cape Verdean immigration to Argentina (Maffia, 2009; Otero Correa, 2006) and therefore research heavily relies on oral sources and statistical data reached through fieldwork (Maffia, 2009). We know that there were three major waves of Cape Verdean migration: the first between the 1850s and 1900, the second in the 1920s after the First World War, and the third in the 1950s after the Second World War (Gomes, 2001) and was a result of economic strife and drought (Maffia, 2009; Molina & López, 2001). Because Cape Verde belonged to Portugal until its independence in 1975, immigrants from Cape Verde had Portuguese nationality and therefore were perceived more as mixed Portuguese citizens rather than blacks (Otero Correa, 2006). As mentioned earlier, the expansion of Argentine industry (especially in shipping) provided prospects for Cape Verdeans as they mostly worked in the docks of Dock Sud (southern Buenos Aires) and the port
of Ensenada (on the coast of the River Plate near the city of La Plata) (Maffía, 2009; Molina & López, 2001).

According to Gomes (2001), a newer wave of African migrations began in the late 1980s and early 1990s with migrants coming from Senegal, Mauritania, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Mali (p. 420) as well as Guinea and Cameroon (Maffía, 2009). The reasons for this migration are due to economic, social, and political instability in their respective countries, having heard of Argentina as developed (Gomes, 2001), and also because of the increasingly prohibitory policies of Europe (Maffía, 2009, quoting Adepoju, 2009).

Discrimination against those descendants of Africans as well as mestizos in the River Plate region who legally became free began to emerge in colonial times (Sáenz Quesada, 2001, p. 120). As freed slave populations increased in size, so did resentment and prejudice by whites and the landowning class, who began to discriminate against blacks, mulattoes and mestizos by curtailing their opportunities to be educated and barring them from schools and universities, punishing any “uppity” behavior, and denying them the right to bear arms, among other things (p. 120).

A further example of initial discrimination of blacks already occurred as separate platoons of blacks, mulattos, pardos and morenos were formed, who were not allowed to rise in the military ranks, had fewer privileges in general, and were more disciplined and more severely punished for misbehavior or infractions (Pereda Valdés, 1941). Also, in stark differentiation between blacks and mixed people, mestizos and mulattos were taught to read while blacks were not (Brunelli, 1941, p. 105).
In the time of General Juan Manuel de Rosas, the governor of Buenos Aires who later ruled Argentina directly or indirectly until 1852 (Romero, 2013) with the support of the criollos, cattle ranch owners, peasant populations, and especially blacks (Andrews, 1989; Robledo, 2010; Skidmore, 2005) like other Latin American leaders at the time (Skidmore, 2005). For this reason, Afro-Argentines under Rosas were in a favorable position, restricting slave trafficking and lifting previously instituted bans on candombe festivals in public (Andrews, 1989, p. 118). Still, however, indications that the situation of Afro-Argentines did not improve further under his rule reflect a use of the Afro-descendant population’s support for political interests (Andrews, 1989; Skidmore, 2005). Andrews (1989) also attributes the “fall in favor” of Afro-Argentines after Rosas to an increasing popularity of liberal ideologies from Europe in the mid-1800s, moving away from a traditional Spanish colonial past (p. 121). After Rosas fell, public candombe festivals experienced a rapid decline (Rossi, 1926, p. 89) and while Afro-Argentine newspapers flourished in those times, also began dwindling towards the end of the 19th century (Andrews, 1989).

**Racism and Othering: Concepts, Invisibilization, Whitening, and Mestizaje in Argentina**

In this section we will review the general concepts and definitions of racism and mestizaje (racial mixing), the relationship between race and class as well as inequality, and two interrelated forms of racism called invisibilization, and blanqueamiento (whitening). Subsequently, because the Argentine case has specific characteristics within these types, we will trace how these processes have played out in the country.
Racism

Racism is defined as “any action, practice, or belief that reflects the racial worldview – the ideology that humans are divided into separate exclusive biological entities called ‘races’, that there is a causal link between inherited physical traits and traits of personality, intellect, morality, and other cultural behavioral features, and that some races are innately superior to others” (Smedley, 2014). Rattansi (2007) points out that while racism comes partly from the act of evaluating what is ‘different’ negatively, referred to as “heterophobia” by Taguieff (2001, p. 20), outsiders are “not automatically feared or hated” (p. 3) signaling that racism is more of a social construct (Blank et al., 2004; Ratcliffe, 2004; Rattansi, 2007; Sutton, 2008).

It is useful to contextualize racism historically in order to understand its origins. Though the term ‘race’ as we more or less know it today did not appear until the early 16\textsuperscript{th} century in Europe when it was used to refer to family or lineage (Banton, 1987), already the Egyptians differentiated the Nubians as darker (people coming from the region of modern day Ethiopia); the ancient Greeks already spoke of “barbarians”; and later in the Middle Ages, ‘otherness’ was associated with darkness, blackness, and wilderness (Rattansi, 2007). The age of colonization inherited this idea of the ‘savage’ other, which influenced colonizers to think of those who inhabit unknown lands as primitive and beast-like (Rattansi, 2007). Scientific racism and eugenics gained popularity after the Enlightenment, also known as the “Age of Reason” where science, and especially classifications, were used to explain the natural world; the three primary assumptions of the science of racism are first, that humans are divided into a set number of races; secondly, each race has physical and measurable characteristics; and thirdly, races have certain moral and social traits (Rattansi, 2007, p. 31). Even though we have attained a better understanding of racism after the end of the Second World War, the establishment of the civil
The meanings of race and ethnicity have changed over time and these concepts “are not terms that have fixed referents” (Wade, 2010, p. 4); generally, even though this distinction is not always clear, “black” is used as a racial reference and “indigenous” as an ethnic reference (Wade, 2010; Van Dijk, 2005). In looking at the different ways ethnic groups were viewed in Latin America, Wade (2010) has found that dating from colonial times, indigenous people in this region have been regarded as being on the outside of society, as an “other”, while Africans and Afro-descendants were seen as being both “other” (outside of society) as well as inside (pp. 2-3).

In terms of a typology of racism, Van Dijk (2005) provides us with five general types: a) racism as domination, b) racism as discrimination, c) racism as institution, d) racist beliefs, and e) racism as discourse. Van Dijk breaks racism as institution down into three categories: media, politics, and education.

In racism as domination, we see the workings of power and the abuse of power by one group of people over another, “based on constructed differences of ethnicity, appearance, origin, culture, and/or language” often resulting in social inequality (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 2). Racism as discrimination, many manifestations of which are discursive, consists of social, economic, and political “discriminatory practices that reproduce racism in everyday life” – anywhere from being spoken to impolitely to “not getting attention at school” or “being stopped constantly by police” or “being ‘forgotten’ in textbooks” (p. 3). Institutional racism, on the other hand, is the formalization, or organizing, of discriminatory practices within different structures; this could be
through legislation (such as segregation), through racist political parties, reproduction of prejudices and stereotypes in the media, or incorporated in schools and textbooks through the way subjects are taught (pp. 4-7). Racism through belief is reproduced by assumptions and stereotypes that are learned socially, and racist discourse is all of the previous types combined through social interactions, interpersonal communication, and most importantly the media (pp. 7-11).

Another important aspect, or even a result, of racism is “internalized racial oppression”, or the adoption of negative connotations of race by the members of ethnic groups themselves (Pyke, 2010). It has a psychological aspect, in which racist stereotypes and ideas can lead to “feelings of self-doubt, disgust, and disrespect for one’s race and/or oneself” (p. 553), a phenomenon that was countered beginning in the 1960s through a discourse focusing on “Black is Beautiful” as well as the Black Pride Movement of the 1970s (p. 554).

Latin American racism has specific characteristics in that it stems from “systems of ethnic-racial dominance historically rooted in European colonialism and its legitimization” through the enslavement of Africans and indigenous people (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 83). On the basis of recent research, Gotkowitz (2011) shows how discriminatory practices are present today in “the effects of labor markets, workplaces, and schools; biased treatment by the police and legal systems; de facto exclusion from public space; and diverse forms of violence, both verbal and physical, that state agents or private citizens perpetrate against racial ‘others’” (p. 26). Several reasons explain the rise of discrimination in Latin America over recent years; one of them being inter-Latin American migration and host countries’ reactions to it, the civil wars of the 1970s and 1980s in Peru and Central America, and indigenous movements which “not only claim cultural,
social, juridical, and economic rights; they also call attention to centuries of discrimination” in fighting for cultural rights (Gotkowitz, 2011, pp. 26-29). Generally, the case is that those who look more European discriminate against those who look less European where being white is associated with “more positive qualities and values, such as intelligence, ability, education, beauty, honesty, kindness,” while non-white people are associated with the opposite: “ugliness, laziness, delinquency, irresponsibility, backwardness, lack of intelligence” (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 84).

There is also a denial of the existence of racism; in Brazil, the idea that the ‘racial democracy’ was only a façade to cover the presence of discrimination has been elaborated on (Duany, 2000; Htun, 2001; Twine, 1998; Wade, 2003a; Winant, 1992), and the same seems to occur in countries such as Venezuela (Wright, 1990) and other nations in the region, especially on the premise that any inequalities that exist are due to socioeconomic or class differences, not racism⁴ (Van Dijk, 2005).

**Race, Class, and Inequality**

The literature on the relationship between race and class is vast, and has evolved in recent times to be included in literature on social inequality, particularly in Latin America (De Ferranti et al., 2004; Lin & Harris, 2008).

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⁴ As Htun (2004) explains, the theory behind a racial democracy is that “the disproportionate impoverishment of blacks and their absence among elites is due to class discrimination and the legacy of slavery, and that the absence of state-sponsored segregation, a history of miscegenation, and social recognition of intermediate racial categories have upheld a unique racial order.” In other words, the theory assumes that any inequalities between people arise from class-based, socio-economic differences rather than institutional racism (p. 64). The theory was originally developed in 1933 by Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre in *The Masters and the Slaves* (Htun, 2004; Proença Bonilha, 2006; Wade, 2008).
Chancer & Watkins (2006) provide an excellent overview of the discussions surrounding the relationship between race and class. They point to William Julius Wilson (1980, 1987, 1996) as the most prominent proponent of class-based explanations for differences in socio-economic levels, who argued that the significance of race in determining this phenomenon was dwindling and that benefits policies based on class rather than race would improve lives more effectively. One of the scholars on the other side of the argument, who argued that race is indeed an important determinant of class, is Stephen Steinberg (year) arguing that affirmative action works, that terms such as “underclass” were really a mask for racist thinking, and that the civil rights movements were successful because of stressing the importance of race (Chancer & Watkins, 2006, p. 65). Additional work by researchers Chancer & Watkins examine here are Massey & Denton (year) who studied the effects of segregation in the USA. For Chancer & Watkins, it is important to combine both theories without subtracting from either one (p. 67). Kandal (1995) makes a similar argument, calling for class-based theories not to be dismissed among rising popularity for race-based arguments.

Greene (2012) makes a similar case by looking at perhaps the most important political thinkers on this subject: Karl Marx (1977) on the class-based argument side (who explained inequalities on the basis of class), and W. E. B. Du Bois (1986) on the race-based arguments side (who suggested divisions along a “color line” and argued that there was a connection between liberalism, political economy, and race).

Recent work by a series of scholars does show a connection between the two, however. In The Colors of Poverty, Lin & Harris (2008) compiled a series of articles analyzing the connection between race and poverty in the USA. The scholars take into account a series of
interrelated factors and disadvantages and a history of race-based decisions that add up to these disparities, focusing on different forms of discrimination, the influence of culture, education, migration, welfare, and the justice system, concluding that “disadvantages cascade” (p.3). The collection finds a link between race and poverty as a result of this, having an effect on resource distribution and differences in opportunities because “institutions, practices, and beliefs can foster racial disadvantage without any deliberate effort to discriminate” (p. 4).

In their chapter on group-based inequalities focusing on race, ethnicity, and gender, De Ferranti et al. (2004) also found race to be a factor in inequality in Latin America. In particular, Afro-descendants across the continent have less access to services such as water, electricity, and sewage than whites and households headed by indigenous people or Afro-descendants have less wealth (p.90) and “white or nonindigenous men and their households have more – in terms of labor income, formal sector jobs, assets, and education – than does any other ethnic or racial group” (p. 104).

In Balsas’s (2011) opinion, in Argentina the term negro, or black, is not only used for those who have black physical characteristics, but also to refer symbolically to those who are identified as economically disadvantaged (p. 652).

The exclusion of a portion of the population can have negative consequences for economic and social development. Most countries in Latin America are characterized by a deep-seated political culture of inequality, an attitude of exclusion of the other, and a denial of difference, which are an obstacle to development (Calderón & Szmukler, 2004). Calderón & Szmukler see development in terms of the exercise of citizenship, which in turn is affected by poverty, culture, and inequality, and they argue that a more inclusive kind of development in a
culturally, politically, socially, and economically heterogeneous society can only be achieved through a “pluralist, deliberative culture” where the other is fully recognized. “Recognition of identity is critical to policy making” (Norman, 2011). Studies show a correlation between socioeconomic disparities and the classification of, or identification as, Afro-Latino populations (Norman, 2011).

**Mestizaje**

Mestizaje is “the process of interracial and/or intercultural mixing” (Martínez-Echazábal, 1998, p. 20) which occurred in Latin America as different races and cultures came in contact beginning in colonial times generally through the mixing of Spaniards, indigenous people, and Afro-descendants (Ratier, 1975; Skidmore, 2005).

Even though they are sometimes used interchangeably, Martínez-Echazábal (1998) distinguishes between the words *mestizaje* and *miscegenation* as the latter is more associated with the “sexual union of two people of different races” whereas *mestizaje* in Latin America is understood a general mixing between races, both biologically and culturally (p. 28). In Argentina, both happened (Andrews, 1989; Briones, 2004; Myers, 2006; Ratier, 1975).

Many Latin American countries, including Argentina, see themselves as racial a “melting pot” or *crisol de razas* (Grimson, 1997; Myers, 2006; Ratier, 1975) in which the different races were expected to “melt together” and create a new, homogenous race (Grimson, 1997, p. 96). Eventually this did occur, as the *mestizo* population has become the main type of ethnicity in much of the continent resulting in highly multiracial societies (Skidmore, 2005, p. 16).

As Moreno Navarro (1969) points out, *mestizaje* had already been occurring in Latin America before the influx of Spanish settlers and African slaves, among indigenous and
Amerindian people—these arrivals intensified and broadened racial mixing. This intensification led to attempts to categorize and classify the different combinations of unions and their progeny, resulting in a list of terms to signify each type. A few of the main terms and their meanings were:

- **mestizo** - generally mixed, but used to signify exclusively the combination of Spaniards with indigenous people;
- **mulato** (also *moreno* or *pardo*) – whites and blacks;
- **zambo** – black and indigenous;
- **morisco** or **cuarterón de mulato**, known as **trigueños** in Argentina—lighter than **mulato** but still of dark complexion; and
- **torna atrás** or **salto atrás** (literally, “a jump backwards”) are those who have one **mestizo** and one black parent, for instance, meaning that instead of the mestizo moving “forwards” by choosing someone whiter, they have moved “backwards” on the trajectory of becoming whiter (Moreno Navarro, 1969). Depending on the country, there are other denominations depending on the combinations and generations of “removal” from (or the “return to”) indigenous or black ethnicity (Moreno Navarro, 1969). These categories multiplied along with the combinations: 16 types were known to be recorded by Spanish officials by the 1700s, and later this number rose to about 52 (Andrews, 2004, p. 48).

For the most part, divisions between whites, **mestizos**, **mulatos**, and blacks existed, however, the lines were blurred through Christianization and marriage, sometimes allowing whites and **mestizos** to marry, or **mestizos** with indigenous people, showing some fluidity and movement among the population (Skidmore, 2005, p. 20).

The creoles, or **criollos** in much of Latin America and specifically in Argentina, were the descendants of the Spanish colonists who were already born in the New World (Shumway, 1991). According to Briones (2006) however, the term **criollo** in Argentina has come to include some forms of mestizaje such as whites and indigenous people, and is actually regarded as being
very much within the notion of what is Argentine – after all, the image of the melting pot was an important part of Argentine national identity in the 18th and 19th centuries (Myers, 2006, p. 137) – at the same time, however, this did not go so far as to create a notion of a fully “mestizo nation” as has occurred in other Latin American countries (Briones, 2006, pp. 84-85).

Invisibilization and Whitening through Mestizaje as a Form of Racism

The terms invisibilization, and blanqueamiento (whitening) are used throughout this paper. Almost all previous work regarding Afro populations in Argentina explain that they have been made “invisible” not only because of actual miscegenation and mestizaje, but also through the purposeful denial or negation of the existence of blacks in Argentina, as well as the encouragement of the idea that whiteness and European heritage hold social and cultural supremacy (Duany, 2000; Golash-Boza, 2010; Skidmore, 1993; Wright, 1990). As we will see, invisibility is the effect of one’s existence or an aspect of a person not being recognized (Roberts, 1999) and has to do with being in a disadvantageous position of power (Hammond, 2008). These beliefs can be both imposed by both external factors (the state, society in general) (Biehl, 2005; Hammond, 2008; and internal factors (self-censorship, denial of one’s own ethnic, cultural, or racial roots, sometimes known as “passing” or the emulation of whiteness to get ahead in life) (Sollors, 1997; Wehnert, 2010; Yoshino, 2006).

According to Roberts, invisibility is “a state of being that comes into existence when others refuse to see us, to acknowledge our existence, to accept our presence as making a contribution to a world of meaning” (Roberts, 1999, p. 121). In addition, an important element that Roberts points out is that the invisibilized in fact engage in their own invisibilization as well, by reproducing those same definitions unknowingly and “playing by the rules of the game” (p. 30).
This rendering invisible “results from those who are marginalized being unable to exert any power to change the conditions under which they live or even speak for themselves, given their position in the arrangement of power” (Hammond, 2008, p. 520).

Biehl’s (2005) idea of “technologies of invisibility” is useful for us to analyze this phenomenon. The researcher applies it to a very specific case: that of the neglect by the Brazilian government of disadvantaged people either vulnerable to fall victim to, or living with, HIV/AIDS. Biehl shows that Brazil has a government program to combat HIV/AIDS, but (neglects) poor people. Biehl applies Foucault’s (1991) idea of biopolitics to explore “how people are made into absent things” (Biehl, 2005, p. 249).

Hammond (2008) also looks at a very specific phenomenon in Ethiopia which she considers to be invisibilization. In this case, disadvantaged Ethiopians who participate in a governmental food program are rendered invisible by the authorities through forced resettlement, restricting access to aid organizations, the control of information and access to it, and especially through “a limited degree of voluntary engagement that enables government and international agencies to brand the operation as voluntary – hence less a matter of concern” (Hammond, 2008, p. 517), Hammond argues. Invisibilization occurs through the removal of “people from the gaze of the public, the government, and international donors” who would provide food aid (p. 518).

In relation to race issues, there are circumstances when individuals or circumstances create invisibility of the person’s ascriptive characteristics. One version of this is known as “passing.” The expression ‘passing’, or more specifically, ‘passing for white’, has various definitions, most of which converge on the idea of a “crossing of the colour line from black to white in order to transcend racial barriers” (Wehnert, 2010, p. 1); or as Sollors (1997) put it,
passing is the “crossing of any line that divides social groups” (p. 247). Quoting Ratna Roy, Sollors offers another meaning which alludes to the person’s identity, whereby passing is “assimilating into white society by concealing one’s antecedents” (p. 247).

Yoshino (2006) takes this further and refers to this phenomenon as “covering” from a very personal perspective, describing it as the attempt to “tone down a disfavored identity to fit into the mainstream,” a behavior which he suggests is in fact an assault on our civil rights. In fact, Yoshino suggests that racial identity, while having a biological component, most importantly has a behavioral one.

Another version of making race invisible, whether imposed externally or internally by a person, is through a process called “whitening.” One of the earliest researchers addressing the issues of whitening is Thomas Skidmore (1993) who provides a very detailed study on the history of racial ideology in Brazil in his book, Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought originally published in 1974. Skidmore (1993) analyzes the ideas of Brazilian intellectuals at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, finding that the peaceful racial democracy (where racism and race problems supposedly are absent) does not exist, in addition to Brazilian policies of encouraging European immigration, which was “overwhelmingly white” (p. 45) having been geared towards a purposeful whitening of the population.

Winthrop Wright (1990) writes about whitening in Venezuela. Wright traces Venezuelan history, concludes that Venezuela actively encouraged immigration from Europe in the early 1900s, and finds that the idea of Venezuela being a racial democracy does not apply to Afro-Venezuelans. In fact, Wright posits, that theory hides the persistence and existence of racism as
Afro-Venezuelans were historically regarded as inferior in a society that idealizes European-ness in a country where people tend to refer to themselves, as the title suggests, as “Café con leche” (coffee with milk) to the mixed roots of the population, but even then found that “many Venezuelans wanted to dilute the café as much as possible with more leche” (Wright, 1990, Chapter 1, para. 3).

Golash-Boza (2010) breaks whitening into categories: social whitening, cultural whitening, and intergenerational whitening (p. 141). According to Golash-Boza, social whitening is when a black person is seen as whiter “through an increase in class status” (applied mostly to black people); cultural whitening is when an indigenous person can be considered whiter because of acculturation; and intergenerational whitening is when two black people’s child is considered whiter than its parents (applied to blacks or indigenous people) (p. 141). A more ‘deliberate’ type of whitening is described by Skidmore (1993) and Graham (1990), who posit that various South American countries encouraged racial mixture, or mestizaje, with the objective of whitening the population in order to “improve the race.” As Golash-Boza (2010) points out by using examples presented by Wright (1990) and Wade (1993), respectively, social whitening of a black person in Venezuela can be achieved by material wealth combined with social status, and in Colombia, wealth can cause a black person to be treated as a white person would be treated.

Duany (2000), summarizing the literature on race in Puerto Rico, finds that Puerto Rican blacks not only continue to be discriminated against and stigmatized, but they are also “subject to an ideology of whitening through intermarriage with lighter-skinned groups and a denial of their cultural heritage and physical characteristics” (p. 10).
Racism in Argentina

Several academics have analyzed contemporary racism in Argentina (Bellotti, 2010; Gomes, 2007; Gotkowitz, 2011; Grimson, 2005; Morales, 2011; Sutton, 2008; Van Dijk, 2005; Villalpando et al., 2005). Argentina has been found to present five general types of discriminatory axes (Van Dijk, 2005). The first is a historical and present discrimination against indigenous people; the second is prejudice against poor people of mixed descent, referred to formerly as “cabecitas negras” (described later in this section); the third is anti-semitism; the fourth is directed against immigrants from Peru, Bolivia, and Paraguay; and the fifth is prejudice against Koreans (p. 111). A sixth type of discrimination can be added to this list, namely: discrimination against Afro-descendants (Gomes, 2007; Sutton, 2008; Villalpando et al., 2005).

The xenophobic and racist attitudes toward immigrants from Bolivia, Peru and Paraguay began to surface during the 1990s – nationals from these countries shouldered the blame for the country’s economic problems. However, some of this racism subsided during the economic crisis at the end of 2001, as immigrant and local protesters banded together in defense of their rights (Gotkowitz, 2005; Grimson, 2005).

According to Sutton (2008), Argentina’s “hegemonic discourse has provided few ways to articulate experiences of racism” (p. 109). However, this author goes on to analyze the existing human rights and antiracist framework in place, which we will turn to later in this paper. In her evaluation, Sutton further finds that ‘othered’ Argentines “have experienced invisibility, everyday mistreatment, physical violence, erasure from history, economic disadvantage, expulsion from their land, harassment by the authorities, racist media representations, and environmental injustice” (p. 109).
A detailed study on the characteristics of racism against Afro-descendants in Argentina was carried out by Villalpando et al. (2005) as a diagnostic study in support of the National Plan against Discrimination directed by the INADI\(^5\). According to their research with human rights organizations, Afro-descendants in Argentina still live in situations of exclusion, have lower levels of schooling, live in precarious conditions, and often have “subordinate” types of occupations (p. 117). Additionally, the community has denounced discriminatory acts in institutions such as educational establishments, the media, and hospitals where they are left waiting for lengthy amounts of time to receive attention (p. 117).

Gomes (2007) also examines racism against blacks in Argentina, placing a large portion of responsibility for racist attitudes on the media and on the education system, as these have created stereotypes, perceptions, and attitudes. The word “black,” or the Spanish term “negro,” has negative connotations locally and is associated with “the contemptuous, the ugly, dirty, bad, fake”. However, when people are called out on using the word “negro” for these uses, first, Argentines consider racism to be a very sensitive topic (almost a taboo), and second, they say they are not referring to skin color, only to a mentality (Gomes, 2007).

The term “cabecita negra” is worthy of note. Hugo Ratier (1975) writes in his book with the same title, *El Cabecita Negra*, that this term was coined around the 1940s when large numbers of poor rural *mestizo* laborers began arriving in Buenos Aires looking for work (p. 28). The term, used in a derogatory way, means something along the lines of “little black headed ones” which alluded to the skin color and phenotype of these work seekers (Andrews, 2004; Grimson, 2005); according to Foster et al. (1998), it used to be a phrase used by opponents of Peronism as “a slur against provincials” (p. 9).

\(^{5}\) National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism.
Another form of discrimination against blacks is through exoticism and the assumption that because a person is black or has African-type characteristics, they must not be from Argentina (Bellotti, 2010; Morales, 2011). In terms of rising visibility, Morales (2011) suggests that the relatively new process of “extreme visibility” and perceived exoticism is due at least in part to some African immigrants’ occupation as vendors, which constantly exposes them to the public eye (p. 165).

In the Argentine case, Shumway (1991), Zimmermann (1992), Helg (1990), and Windus (2003) write about whitening. They analyze the influence of European liberalism in Argentina especially at the time the nation was founded, and looks especially at Juan Bautista Alberdi’s and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento’s influences on Argentine political thought.

A broad group of researchers explore invisibilization and how it is very particular in Argentina. The term “invisibilization” referring specifically to denying the existence of blackness and Afro-descendants was coined by the historian George Reid Andrews (1989, 1991, 2004, 2010) as a result of extensive research in Latin America particularly Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina. Since then, scholars from various disciplines including history, sociology and anthropology have applied Andrews’ conclusions in their analysis of this phenomenon in Argentina (Andrews, 1989; Cottrol, 2007; Frigerio, 2000a; Grimson, 2006; Liboreiro, 1999; Maffia, 2009; Morales, 2011; Picotti, 2001; Villalpando et. al, 2005). Peñaloza (2007) stands out among researchers dealing with invisibilization in that she calls for newer ways to explain what happened in Argentina.

The idea that Argentina emulated Europe during the nation formation stage, and still regards itself as European, has been argued by various scholars (Andrews, 1989; Shumway,
1991; Windus, 2003). Both Windus (2003) and Shumway (1991) trace many elements of contemporary Argentine identity back to the early days of the nation when a national identity was being formed, and argue that the process through which it was forged at the time had a profound influence on how the country sees Afro-Argentines and the way they viewed themselves at the time. In this sense the Argentine nation-state bears the traces of the theories of civilization as they were conceived in the late 1700s and early 1800s by thinkers in Europe (Shumway, 1991; Windus, 2003), as well as influences of social Darwinism⁶, positivism⁷ (that knowledge is derived from facts and scientific knowledge), and geographical determinism⁸ (Helg, 1990; Zimmermann, 1992).⁹ The growing stigma of belonging to the “other” group, the non-white European population, has caused families to deny their Afro-Argentine heritage, as the idea of an ethnically homogenous Argentina is still prevalent today (Liboreiro, 1999; Schávelzon, 2007; Segato, 2007; Solomianski, year).

Some of the most important figures of early Argentine political thought are, among others, the aforementioned Juan Bautista Alberdi, and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (Shumway, 1991; Windus, 2003). They discussed and presented ideas on civilization being based on citizens who are free, educated, land or property owners, and with the right to vote (so, essentially men)

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⁶ Social Darwinism is “an extension of Darwinism to social phenomena” or more specifically “a sociological theory that sociocultural advance is the product of intergroup conflict and competition and the socially elite classes (…) possess biological superiority in the struggle for existence” (Social Darwinism, 2014).


⁸ The theory that human characteristics, culture, and habits are influenced by geographic location. Ellsworth Huntington’s put forth this theory in Civilization and Climate (1915) and in World-Power and Evolution (1919), and later retaken by Jared Diamond in Guns, Germs and Steel (1997).

⁹ These ideas are discussed in Latin American Political Thought and Ideology (Jorrin & Martz), and Latin American Political Thought (Susanna Nuccetelli).
very similar to Rousseau’s Social Contract – categories which excludes anyone others such as women, slaves, prisoners, and especially, those of a different race (Windus, 2003, p. 4).

Both Shumway (1991) and Svampa (2006) explore the connection between early political ideologies in Argentina and contemporary political thought. While Shumway (1991) provides an overview of political thinkers and trends, Svampa (2006) focuses on the theories and proposals primarily of Sarmiento but also other thinkers of his time.

As Svampa (2006) points out, term “civilization” was first used as we know it today by the Count of Mirabeau, one of the leaders of the French revolution, and the term “barbaric” or “barbarian” was first used by the Greeks to describe those who didn’t belong to the polis (pp. 17-20). Svampa explains that in the dichotomy of civilization-barbarism, the idea of civilization gains legitimacy through the negative connotation of barbarism.

Similarly to Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Argentina was also preoccupied with ideas of nationhood (Shumway, 1991). An influential group of intellectuals later contributed to the discussion of how to achieve a successful nation: the “Generation of 1837”, a group Shumway (1991) describes as thinkers disillusioned with the state of the nation and opposed to the ruling government of Juan Manuel de Rosas, who came together to think about ways to modernize Argentina by evoking and emulated their European intellectual counterparts. They regarded the vast unpopulated territories of Argentina, and the mixed race people in them, as “barbaric” and uncivilized (Shumway, 1991; Svampa, 2006) and proposed that the main solutions to Argentina’s economic and social problems were immigration from
Europe, controlling caudillismo\textsuperscript{10} through a strong executive, and using European expertise and investments to move the country forward (Shumway, 1991).

One intellectual from this group was Juan Bautista Alberdi. In his 1852 treatise known as \textit{Bases}\textsuperscript{11}, Alberdi presents a comprehensive policy paper in which he provides a diagnosis of the River Plate region’s constitutional situation at the time, an analysis of the Constitutions of various countries in the region, and recommendations for a new Argentine Constitution (Alberdi, 2009) after which many of its elements were incorporated into the 1853 Constitution (Windus, 2003). Within the recommendations, he dedicates a chapter to the need for European immigration (Alberdi, 2009, pp. 81-96) where he expresses his opinion that “each European who comes to our shores brings us more civilization” (p. 81) and in an argument perhaps most quoted by the authors explored for this chapter, argues that no matter how much education the gauchos and “popular masses” receive, they’ll never be like a hardworking Englishman (p. 82). In fact, as Svampa also points out, Article 25 of the Constitution still today reads: “the Federal Government shall foster European immigration; and may not restrict, limit or burden with any tax whatsoever, the entry into the Argentine territory of foreigners who arrive for the purpose of tilling the soil, improving industries, and introducing and teaching arts and sciences” (Argentine Constitution, 2010).

Sarmiento’s two influential works are \textit{Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism}, and \textit{Racial Conflict and Harmony}. In \textit{Facundo}, Sarmiento explains the political turmoil in Argentina in terms of the dichotomy of civilization against barbarism, and as Windus (2003) points out, describing civilization as freedom and progress and located in the metropolis, and describing

\textsuperscript{10} A caudillo is “a Spanish or Latin American military dictator” (Caudillo, 2014).

\textsuperscript{11} The full title is \textit{Bases and starting points for the political organization of the Argentine republic} (own translation).
barbarism as the epitome of authoritarianism and violence directly related with Juan Manuel de Rosas’ government at the time (p. 208). In *Racial Conflict and Harmony*, as quoted by Martínez-Echazábal (1998, p. 25), Sarmiento is of the opinion that

“It may be terribly unjust to exterminate savages, to suffocate nascent civilizations, to conquer peoples who are in a privileged state of development; yet, thanks to these injustices [North] America, instead of remaining abandoned to savages, incapable of progress, is today occupied by the Caucasian race, the most perfect, the most intelligent, most beautiful and most progressive of races that populate the earth; thanks to these injustices”

reflecting Sarmiento’s high esteem of people of European descent.

Windus (2003) goes on to argue that the conditioning of Argentine national identity with belonging to a civilized, superior, white race was partially responsible for subsequent policies and the *blanqueamiento* which ensued on a state and societal level: first, the promotion of creating or as Windus (2003, p. 5) puts it, the “perfecting” of the supposedly “inferior American race” with the blood of a race imagined as superior: the European [race],” and second, the immigration from Europe enthusiastically encouraged by the State (Shumway, 1991; Windus, 2003; Zimmermann, 1992) which had a serious detrimental impact on job competitiveness for Afro-Argentines (Windus, 2003, p. 10).

A second generation to continue some of the policies developed by the generation of 1837, the group known as the “Generation of 1880” was the governing elite of Buenos between 1880 and 1916, credited with consolidating the political and economic organization of the Argentine republic as much of today’s structures are based on reforms implemented in that time (Lewis, 2002). Previously, Julio Argentino Roca, Minister of War between 1878 and 1879, had been charged with expanding the frontier in what was later dubbed as the “conquest of the

Interestingly, in the various Afro-Argentine newspapers in print during the mid to late 19th century, Windus (2003) found that many of them represented a counter-discourse to the imagined white nation and in fact sought to correct this view by representing themselves as loyal, civilized, educated patriots and fomenting these traits among their communities. Two strategies were used to achieve this: first, through education, cultural activities, and an emphasis on a unified community, and second, on highlighting the contributions in military service and sacrifice and heroic acts performed in the independence wars (p. 8).

Today, the assumption that Argentina is “white” results in marginalizing those who are not considered sufficiently white; this general assumption is difficult to study and understand because it is learned through interactions rather than through clearly delineated structures or classification (Frigerio, 2011). To clarify this, Frigerio (2006, p. 82) explains that in Argentina

“‘whiteness’ (…) results from a process socially constructed and maintained by: 1) a certain way of ascribing racial categories in our everyday interactions; 2) the concealment of black ancestors in families; and 3) the displacement, in the discourse about stratification and social differences, of factors of color or race towards those of class.”

As a result, blackness in Argentina is attributed only to the obviously phenotypically of African descendant, meaning with dark skin and “mota” or curly hair (Frigerio, 2006, p. 81), and often only those who grew up in a family whose members know of their African ancestry, and pass on this knowledge, are able to incorporate it in their identity and later to recognize themselves as Afro-Argentine (Frigerio & Lamborghini, 2011b, p. 3). Liboreiro (1999) for example recounts the story of Lucía, a girl whose family invested more in her clothes and education than in her whiter siblings in order to hide the fact that she was darker, and only in
later years did she begin to take notice of acts of discrimination against her in her workplace, showing the complex effects that whitening had on this family (p.53).

In terms of class, Andrews (1979) found that historically, by 1900 Buenos Aires was already a society stratified in terms of class but that Afro-Argentines “remained a caste apart” (p. 39) and illustrates this with examples in the present of the community referring even to itself as ‘la clase de color’ or the colored class, reflecting the fact that in Argentina being black means being in a different class. The community speaks of class in the documentary Negro Che (Masliah, 2006), where they refer to two different types of blacks; “Negro Che” on the one hand, and “Negro Usted” on the other. If someone is a Che, it refers to someone who has remained ‘true to their blackness’ so to speak, conserving traditions and playing the drums, continuing to behave in ways that make him or her look like a ‘poor black,’ possibly reflected in what is considered a poor way of dressing and ‘not of a good category’ (Gomes, 2007; Masliah, 2006). The Usted type of black refers to someone of the Afro-Argentine community who has academic, economic, or social aspirations to be of a ‘higher’ class and status, those who wanted to become integrated into the system, the one with “suit and tie” (Gomes, 2007; Masliah, 2006). Gomes (2007) argues that the Negro Che has to be reclaimed nowadays, as he or she is the one who was oppressed, the one who is now mobilizing, and the one who takes pride in his or her heritage and shows it.

Farther beyond the whitening of blackness, in general a common idea that exists in Argentina is that there are no black people here (Andrews, 1989; Frigerio, 2000a; Liboreiro, year; Picotti, 2001; Villalpando et. al, 2005) and to the average Argentine, black communities do

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12 “Usted” is a polite form of address demonstrating respect, while “Che” is a more informal way of addressing people, proper to the Río de la Plata region.
not exist in the traditional sense (Gomes, 2007). This constitutes a form of invisibilization, as “it is not that the black person is not seen, but he is seen as nonexistent, a mechanism that is revealed as one of the principal ways in which racism is manifested” (Leite, 1996, quoted by Maffia, 2009, p. 4). This invisibility of blackness in Argentina is currently being reconfigured judging both from interactions and insertions into society of recent African immigrants, through the growing alliances between the various different African and Afro-descendant communities, and the efforts of organizations who support them and Afro-descendants in general (Gomes, 2007; Morales, 2011), all of which is causing the contrary, more visibility (Morales, 2011).

**Multicultural Citizenship and Afro-Argentines**

Are these processes susceptible to work through policies of multicultural citizenship? In this section we will look at some of the currents of multicultural citizenship theory, multicultural reforms in Latin America, and their repercussion in Argentina.

The 1980s saw a shift in political theory, which previously focused on redistribution and increasingly began to emphasize the meanings and mechanisms of recognition, cultural difference, multiculturalism, and feminist identities, and how these are connected to citizenship and democracy (Lenz & Dallmann, 2007). Some of the prominent authors who have written about multicultural citizenship are Young (1990), Kymlicka (1995), and specifically in a Latin American context, Hooker (2005); and Frigerio & Lamborghini (2011b), and López, (2010b) in the Argentine case.

The concept of multicultural citizenship embodies the highly contested subject of group-based rights. As Joppke (2003) explains, the ideas incorporated in universal citizenship were born out of the French and American revolutions as a response to the strongly hierarchical feudal
system. When understood as being a member of a state, citizenship is “inherently group-differentiated” (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 124) as it refers to being a member of a specific state rather another.

In Joppke’s opinion, multicultural citizenship is concerned with “reconciling the universalism of rights and membership in liberal nation-states with the challenge of ethnic diversity and other ascriptive ‘identity’ claims,” this serving as a “mechanism to accommodate ethnic, national and other minorities” (Joppke, 2003, p. 245), reflecting the belief that universal and multicultural rights can coexist.

For Young (1989), universal citizenship is the equal rights and status conferred upon members of modern nation-states (p. 250). However, to Young, the ‘universal’ aspect of universal citizenship contains not equality and universality, but oppression, because the definition of what is universal is left to the dominant group, and so differentiated rights are for those in the oppressed groups (minorities). The tension between recognizing, acknowledging, and protecting group differences, as Young (1990) proposes is essential in a democracy in order to protect group rights, stands in contrast to the previously held notions of a sort of “color blind” equality. As suggested in her title, in her writings on justice Young argues against the concept of equal treatment and universalism in Justice and the Politics of Difference, stressing that group-differentiated policies where cultural groups are treated in their own right are necessary as a mechanism against oppression because “a denial of difference contributes to social group oppression” as in her opinion, “a conception of justice which challenges institutionalized domination and oppression should offer a vision of a heterogeneous public that acknowledges and affirms group difference” (Young, 1990, p. 10).
On the other hand, in *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995), Kymlicka argues that universal and differential rights can both be embodied in the concept of justice. He presents three types of rights that minorities or groups within a country could call for, which he refers to as “group-specific” and are not mutually exclusive as they can overlap: special representation rights (specifically, representation of minorities in government institutions), self-government rights, and poly-ethnic rights (pp. 10-33). Additionally, in Kymlicka’s (2001) opinion, the debate has ended over whether granting distinct collective rights to certain groups (ie, multiculturalism) is unfair, with widespread recognition of the fact that ignoring differences can be hurtful to some groups. As a result, he argues, it is not only those who defend minority rights who have to prove that their policies will not create injustices, but also those who defend “difference-blind” policies (p. 33).

In Latin America, these ideas in the 1990s culminated in a wave of constitutional reforms (Morrison, 2007; Hooker, 2005; Wade, 2008) where countries added non-discrimination clauses to their constitutions and incorporated ethnicity as central to state discourse and policy as a result of the mobilization of indigenous people (Hale, 2002; Vom Hau & Wilde, 2009; Yashar, 2005) resulting in “considerable achievements, both in the realm of struggles over representations, and in the substantive expansion of their rights” (Hale, 2002, p. 485). Reforms ranged from collective land rights to affirmative action policy (Paschel, 2010). In addition to indigenous mobilization, international organizations incorporated the differential rights of indigenous people on the human rights agenda, which governments assimilated by using a multicultural approach (Sieder, 2002). Beginning in the mid-1980s, the following countries reformed their constitutions to include diversity in a reflection of this shift: Guatemala (1985), Nicaragua (1986), Brazil (1988),

Black social movements and activism were also important factors for the reforms of legislation (Hooker, 2005; Paschel, 2010; Wade, 1998).\textsuperscript{13} Morrison (2012) generally places black social movements in four timespans with respect to policy changes. The first movements belong to the colonial era as forms of resistance, between the 17\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries; the second types belong to the general progressive Latin American movements of the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century until about the 1960s; the third is between the 1960s and the late 1990s as a “defense of blackness” as a multicultural right; and from the late 1990s to the present, movements focus on increasing inclusion and on specific public policies for the population (p. 248).

Until the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century, the black rights movement was made up of informal associations and groups, after which time they were increasingly recognized as official organizations with civil society representation status (Morrison, 2012, p. 247). The organizations’ new status allowed them to apply for funding from international organizations which included the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank, among others (Lennox, 2009).

Wade (2008) framed black mobilization processes using the following elements. On the one hand, states began recognizing multiculturalism as central to democracy, and therefore made constitutional and legal changes; secondly, indigenous and black mobilization combined with international organization regimes in their global definitions of indigenous and human rights; and

\textsuperscript{13}Social movements here are understood as “groups of individuals with a collective ideology working together to create social change” (Morrison, 2012, p. 247).
finally, increasingly diverse migration patterns of blacks and indigenous people to different parts of the world has strengthened racial identities (p. 187).

In some Latin American countries, indigenous groups seem to have had more success than Afro-Latin groups in gaining collective rights due to their having a specific group identity based on culture and ethnicity that is invoked when making claims (Hooker, 2005; Wade, 2008), aiming for cultural recognition by highlighting differences rather than using a civil rights or anti-discrimination approach. In fact, Hooker (2005, p. 287) notes that few countries in the region, primarily Brazil and Colombia, have so far implemented collective rights along with civil rights specifically for Afro-descendant populations. Hooker (2005, p. 309) suggests, following Kymlicka’s position, that it may be necessary to increasingly apply both a civil rights-based focus combined with a cultural recognition approach, in order to begin working on institutionalized discrimination issues which still persist in the vast majority of countries in the region.

Frigerio & Lamborghini (2011b) place the change in narrative in the mid to late 1990s in Argentina – they highlight the importance of Buenos Aires becoming an autonomous city in 1996 with a newly drafted city constitution\(^{14}\), and they draw the conclusion that Argentina’s adoption of a multicultural narrative created a “structure of opportunities” favoring different groups and minorities. The ideas of cultural rights became widespread, ethnic and cultural diversity gained popularity, and Buenos Aires began to be regarded as a multicultural and diverse city (Frigerio & Lamborghini, 2011b).

\(^{14}\) As a result of the constitutional reforms of 1994, Buenos Aires was declared an autonomous city and drafted its own constitution in 1996 (Constitución y Símbolos, 2014).
Grimson & Kessler (2005) in fact argue that neoliberalism and multiculturalism, culminating in the economic crisis of 2001-2002, set Argentina on a path to rethinking its identity less as a European nation and more as a Latin American one. The global discussions of multiculturalism effectively aided marginalized groups to organize according to ethnic identities, and became more and more visible, seen through an “upsurge in immigrant-based fairs, celebrations, radio stations, soccer leagues and rights organizations” as well as indigenous and Afro-Argentine mobilization (Grimson, 2005, p. 28).

The politics of difference has been a powerful tool for those mobilizing around it. Vom Hau & Wilde (2009) show that two groups of indigenous people in Argentina, the Mbya Guaraní and the Diaguita Calchaquí, were able to reach collective rights using the structures of differentiated group rights mentioned by Kymlicka (1995) and Joppke (2002) which resulted in national multicultural legislation, where the Argentine Constitution defined the country as being a diverse, multiethnic nation\(^\text{15}\) (Argentine Constitution, 2010; Vom Hau & Wilde, 2009). At the same time, Vom Hau & Wilde also point out that these rights need to be taken further in order to have a positive effect on socioeconomic justice.

Morrison (2012) suggests that this is in fact already happening in much of the region, as Afro-Latin organizations “are beginning to work on new thematic areas such as local and economic development through existing structures, and new organizations are emerging that focus on specific topics such as economic opportunity” (p. 260-261).

In the context of the aforementioned multicultural narrative of the late 80s and early 90s, Afro-Argentines began grouping together to raise awareness about their situation, to speak out

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\(^{15}\) For a detailed analysis of indigenous mobilization in Argentina, see Gordillo & Hirsch (2003), and Carrasco (2000).
against racism, and to work towards a higher level of social inclusion. Frigerio & Lamborghini, (2011b) refer to those activists who began teaching “Afro” dance and percussion in Buenos Aires, mainly Afro-descendants from Uruguay, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Peru and other Latin American countries, as “cultural workers” whose work was enormously instrumental to bring more visibility to the community (p. 27). The organizations increasingly had more contact with the state and government officials, so that the mid-2000s, the INADI came to have a Forum of Afro-descendants and Africans (Frigerio & Lamborghini, 2011b, p. 31). In terms of financing, international networks and organizations provided some funding for these activities but in this decreased at the beginning of the 2000s, at which point the organizations relied increasingly on donations from African embassies in Argentina (Frigerio & Lamborghini, 2011b, 2011).

The Impulse of Durban 2001

The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban in 2001 and organized by the United Nations, was a pivotal step for affirmative action for minorities (particularly Afro-descendants) in Latin America and especially for subsequent antiracism policies in Argentina (Frigerio & Lamborghini, 2011b; López, 2005; PNcD, 2014; Tamagno & Maffia, 2011).

The purpose of this conference was to analyze discrimination and racism, recognize the efforts that have been made to combat it, and prepare a plan of action to address all forms of racism.

The main organizing themes were to identify and carry out the following:

1. Sources, cause, forms and contemporary manifestations of racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance;
2. Victims of racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance;
3. Measures of prevention, education and protection aimed at the eradication of racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance at the national, regional and international levels;
4. Provision for effective remedies, recourses, redress, [compensatory] and other measures at the national, regional and international levels;
5. Strategies to achieve full and effective equality, including international cooperation and enhancement of the United Nations and other international mechanisms in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia.

(Durban, 2001)

The output of the conference was a 62 page declaration and an action plan which addressed the five mentioned points. The declaration condemns slavery, the transatlantic slave trade, genocide, and xenophobia against migrants, internally displaced people, refugees and asylum seekers, and mentions that xenophobia is related to, and exacerbates, “poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion and economic disparities” (Declaration of Durban, 2001, p. 7), as are armed conflict, human rights violations, trafficking in persons, and, in article 22, expresses concern “that in some States political and legal structures or institutions, some of which were inherited and persist today, do not correspond to the multi-ethnic, pluricultural and plurilingual characteristics of the population” (Declaration of Durban, 2001, p. 8).

In section two of the document, which is the “Programme of Action,” specific victims of intolerance are identified. These are: Afro-descendants, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, and “other” victims such as the Roma/Gypsy/Sinti/Travellers, people of Asian descent, victims of HIV/AIDS, and ethnic or religious minorities (Declaration of Durban, 2001, pp. 22-31).

In addition, the document specifies the need for measures to be taken against discrimination in Constitutions, laws, legal systems, as well as policies (p. 25). Importantly, the

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16 According to the information, “The bracket in [number] 4 indicates that a consensus could not be reached on the word "compensatory".” (Durban, 2001).
expression “affirmative or positive action strategies” appears often throughout the declaration and the action plan in general, with one of the sections titled “Action-oriented policies and action plans, including affirmative action to ensure nondiscrimination, in particular as regards access to social services, employment, housing, education, health care, etc.” (Declaration of Durban, 2001, p. 39). In particular, the document “requests states” to design and implement such policies “in communities of primarily African descent” (p. 22).

In what can be seen as a notorious change in relation to other stages of the country's history, the delegation from Argentina included members of the Afro-Argentine community, among other communities. Two representatives from the organization África Vive, one from Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos Unión Caboverdeana (a Cape Verdean organization), and two other members of the community (Frigerio & Lamborghini, 2010, 2011b; López, 2005; Maffia & Zubrzycki, 2011). They presented a preliminary report which was a joint project carried out between África Vive and the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman of Buenos Aires, with capacity building offered by the Center for Citizen Participation and Management of Buenos Aires to member of the organization in order to carry out a census and document the situation of Afro-Argentines at the time (Frigerio & Lamborghini, 2011b; Maffia, 2001).

The census, consisting of 196 interviews, focused on the capital city of Buenos Aires and found that 56 percent of the Afro-Argentine population is male and 47 percent is between 31 and 45 of age. Of the total, 39 percent were found to be born in Argentina, and 24 percent of the total were found to be unemployed (Preliminary Report, 2001).

The Durban Declaration also recommended that Latin American countries collect official, numerical data on the number of Afro-descendant population in order to more effectively
formulate policies which redress the effects of slavery which led to a series of census reforms such as Argentina’s inclusion of a question about African ancestry in the 2010 census (López, 2006). In fact, López places the origins of this event (the census question) in a “transnational space” that was created by black movements and networks across the Latin American continent that we mentioned earlier, essentially unifying different claims and movements across borders (p. 100). Additionally, López underlines the growing role from the 70’s onwards of non-governmental and international organizations, such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) with respect to ethnic rights struggles, and the increasing popularity of “cultural democratization” in the 80’s and 90’s (p. 109). Eventually the World Bank and IADB formulated regional technical cooperation projects and pilot projects, such as “Todos Contamos” (“We All Count”) to transfer expertise and implement census taking methods in order to evaluate Afro-descendant populations in the region (p. 104). Prior to the 2010 census however, the World Bank was already involved in the 2005 pilot study for the planning of which it oversaw meetings between INDEC (Argentine National Census Bureau) and a group of Afro-Argentine organizations (specifically, 10 Afro-Argentine, 3 African American, and 3 African groups) (Frigerio & Lamborghini, 2011b, p. 30).

Another impulse for policy debates was the United Nations declaring 2011 to be “International Year for People of African Descent.” In light of this, many countries with populations of African ancestry, especially in South America but also elsewhere, have organized conferences, campaigns, and cultural events to raise awareness. In Argentina for instance, the campaigns mostly focus on raising awareness about the existence of Afro-descendants, their history, and the current situation, whereas in other countries such as Colombia and Brazil where
invisibility is now less an issue, campaigns focus on equality, discrimination, and rights. Additionally, as we saw earlier, Argentina implemented the National Plan against Racism as a direct result of the recommendations in the Durban Declaration (PNcD, 2014).

**Constructions of Identity**

All of the factors we have mentioned so far—historical racism, invisibilization, whitening, mestizaje, and the notion of multicultural citizenship—have had profound consequences for the construction of a general as well as personal Afro-descendant identity, which we will examine next. Stuart Hall (1989) explores diaspora identities from an Afro-Caribbean standpoint. He speaks of two ways of thinking about cultural identity: one as collective, and the second as difference. A collective cultural identity is a broadly shared culture, whereas identity viewed through difference, according to Hall, is a constantly transforming and renegotiated combination of the “play of history, culture, and power” (p. 225). But, “far from being grounded in a mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (p. 225). The past, in this sense, is not a “factual past” but rather it is “constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth” (Hall, 1989, p. 226).

Hall writes of the differences between people of African descent in different countries, yet places the unifying factor among them as located in the shared history of “the uprooting of slavery and transportation” (p. 227), as well as in the beginnings of a “cultural discovery” of blackness and of a new version of Africa (p. 231), all constituting an experience of diaspora Hall defines as being a recognition of diversity (p. 235).
Elaborating on this cultural difference and conception of Africa, Wade (2008) explains that Latin American black identity incorporates, and partly surged from, official multicultural policies adopted by countries in the region that we have just described, in combination with imagining an Africa (Hall, 1989; Wade, 2008), an important reference point for black identity and black movements in Latin America (Wade, 2008, p. 133).

Particularly in Latin America, where according to Whitten & Torres (1998) three symbols can be found in nationalism, that is: *mestizaje*, whitening, and *indigenismo*, creating a context in which *negritud*, or blackness, also defines itself as both a rejection of whitening and an affirmation of blackness. Moreover, black identity is not an insular, national phenomenon; it exists in different versions depending on the region, country and context, and borrows constantly from each other, taking different elements and creating new forms of cultural expression and identity (Hall, 1989; Wade, 2008).

In social and cultural terms, the question of identity for Afro-Latinos is complicated by the various sociological and historical processes we looked at in this chapter that can be contrasted to African Americans’ identity formation. While African descendants in North America tended towards a more cohesive group and identified themselves and each other as part of it, “in Latin America, the multiplicity of racial/color categories coupled with the ideologies of *mestizaje* and *blanqueamiento* that read Afro-Americans out of the history and culture also served to blunt the development of Afro-American group consciousness and identity” (Cottrol, 2007). This “racial fluidity” with a long list of names for mixed or black mentioned earlier made

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17 *Indigenismo* is a Latin American political ideology and movement “advocating a dominant social and political role for Indians in countries where they constitute a majority of the population” (Indigenismo, 2014) and in which states place emphasis on their relationship with indigenous people with the aim of increasing their social inclusion (Engle, 2010).
it hard for groups to forge an identity. For example, the fact that Brazil had no classificatory laws to categorize race, in combination with the high rate of miscegenation, led to there being a very high number of categories ranging from black to white and everything in between; for this reason, racial categories in Brazil, and resulting self-identification, are subjective depending on the social and economic status of those who define them (Morrison, 2012; Telles, 2009).

However, Wade (2008) suggests that in Latin America, the collective fight against racism, and the idea of the African diaspora as a constantly transforming process (also described as such by Hall, 1989), can be elements of cohesion and therefore conducive to a unified black identity across borders (p. 135).

Frigerio (2006) contrasts the fact that in the U.S.A., a person who has black heritage (genetically) fits into the category of African American because of the “one drop rule” while in Argentina and much of Latin America, this is not necessarily so due to the myriad different existent categories we saw earlier.

As scholars studying the Afro-Argentine community point out, the four main communities of Afro-descendants in Argentina are the descendants of slaves brought during colonial Argentina, who refer to their community as Afroargentinos del tronco colonial (Cirio, 2010; Misibamba, 2012; the Cave Verdean diaspora; Afro-Latin American immigrants from Uruguay, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, and more recently the Dominican Republic and Colombia; and recent African immigrants from Senegal, Mali, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and Ghana among others (Frigerio, 2008; Gomes, 2001; Kleidermacher, year; Villalpando et al., 2005).

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18 An expression to refer to the fact that in the U.S.A., if a person has any African-American ancestors, they are considered African American as well (Davis, 1991; Duany, 2000).
According to Cirio (2010), some Afro-argenines of the “tronco colonial” (colonial roots) prefer not to be involved in events that group all blacks in Argentina together, because there seems to be a connotation of temporariness, as though the group were made up of interesting outsiders who have a foreign culture and practices; the point is, they are not blacks in Argentina, they are blacks of Argentina, and this is often not clear. “Rather than intending to fragment the supposed “Afro unity,” the African slave-descendent community in Argentina differentiates itself from the rest of the local afro collective through its history, culture, trajectory, and objectives, with the idea that in order for there to be global equity and the eradication of discrimination and racism, a local project must be formulated” (Cirio, 2010, own translation).

According to Frigerio (2000), beginning in the 1980s, Afro-Uruguayan and Afro-Brazilian communities in Argentina began to represent some elements of traditions and religion, as Afro-Argentines had “almost lost the ability to present their version of their culture and heritage,” but that Afro-Argentine groups were becoming active at the time the article was written (p. 2-3). Specifically, the Afro-Uruguayans created spaces for practicing and teaching Uruguayan candombe and percussion, and Afro-Brazilians established churches of Afro-Brazilian religions such as Umbanda and Batuque, and also taught capoeira and percussion (Frigerio, 2000, 2008; Frigerio & Lamborghini, 2011a) thereby appropriating some of the creation of an Argentine black identity (López, 2010a).

As we saw earlier, Frigerio (2006) explains that in Argentina, the main reason given for social inequalities is class, when in fact he argues that it is due to racial factors, but that the rules governing adscription or categorization are unclear, being more implicit rather than explicit (p. 92). As a result, only those who grew up in a family whose members know of their African
ancestry, and pass on this knowledge, are able to incorporate it in their identity and later to recognize themselves as Afro-Argentine (Frigerio & Lamborghini, 2011b, p. 3).

1.2. Making it Matter and Making it Count: Agenda Setting and Affirmative Action

This section aims to provide an overview of both how agenda setting works – that is, how certain policies achieve priority in the eyes of the state that in turn implements them – and subsequently, specific types of policies based on ethnicity and race namely antidiscrimination and affirmative action policy, which have successfully made it into the agendas of various international governments, including that of Argentina. This came about partially through the confluence of factors mentioned in the previous section, including indigenous and black mobilization, multiculturalist reforms, conferences such as Durban 2001, and increasing government adoption of ideals of diversity, allowing minority sectors of populations across Latin America to insert affirmative action proposals at the government level through this specific policy creation mechanism of agenda setting, opening the way for the increased visibilization of blacks and indigenous people.

Agenda Setting: Theoretical Overview

In order to understand how societal problems gain the state’s attention and come to feature on the government agenda, it is useful to apply the parameters of a process referred to in public policy analysis as agenda setting. The definitions, categories, and factors pertaining to this process, as explained by Birkland (2007), Burstein (1991), and Cobb et al. (1976), will allow us
to structure the different aspects of the agenda building approaches used by Afro-Argentines in this paper.

According to Birkland’s (2007, p. 63) definition, agenda setting is “the process by which problems and alternative solutions gain or lose public and elite attention” whereby agenda is “a collection of problems, understandings of causes, symbols, solutions, and other elements of public problems that come to the attention of members of the public and their governmental officials.” Cobb et al. (1976, p. 126) distinguish between the public agenda and the formal agenda, the former consisting of issues highly visible for the public, and the latter referring to issues adopted as important by officials.

At any given political moment, different groups can be vying for policy change in different ways. According to Burstein (1991, p. 327), “policy change is affected most directly by formal organizations whose activities are channeled and given meaning by culture”, and the government is also an agent in formulating and implementing policy changes through agencies. These social movements and organizations aim to change specific policies (Gamson, 1975 quoted by Burstein, 1991, p. 329), and issues are created using a “causal story” (Burstein, 1991; Birkland, 2007). Causal stories are instrumental because solutions to problems will depend greatly on the type of reasons given for a problem (Birkland, 2007, p. 73).

The way Burstein (1991, p. 128) organizes these efforts to change policy is by delineating “policy domains,” which he defines as “a component of the political system that is organized around substantive issues.” Burstein presents three main ways in which concerns make it into the government portfolio. The first is “substantive” or “functional”, and refers to specific areas such as finance, environment, or energy for instance; the second, “organizational”, type of domain, is
shaped by activists or individuals involved in politics whose actions lead organizations to focus and cooperate on one issue; and the third, “cultural” domain, is the one in which organizations who identify a problem are “influenced by cultural theories about how society works” (p. 128).

It is useful to think of these domains as operating at incremental levels, using Birkland’s (2007, pp. 63-65) illustration of the broader “agenda universe”, where all issues arise; the systemic agenda contains issues that could potentially catch policy makers’ attention; the next, institutional agenda, is where an issue is elevated to the portfolio of policy makers to be examined; and finally, the decision agenda is where the issue is acted upon and the policy creation cycle begins.

The three agenda setting models presented by Cobb et al. (1976) are the following. The “outside initiative” model refers to issues brought to the public’s attention by organizations or civil society groups, after which the initiative reaches the official agenda; the “mobilization” model applies to issues on the formal government agenda which are also translated onto the public agenda; and the “inside initiative” model describes problems on the formal government agenda which are purposely kept from appearing in the public agenda (pp. 127-128).

The factors which influence whether or in what way issues reach agenda status include credibility, persistence, and being “potentially useful to those in power” along with whether the government is “accessible” and “open” (Burstein, 1991, pp. 332-333). How ‘open’ the government is can also depend on the “bias of the system”, according to which certain issues may or may not reach agenda status on the basis of cultural political values that can and do change over time (Birkland (2007) quoting Schattschneider (1975, p. 67).
Timing matters as well. Kingdon uses the example of a “window of opportunity” (Kingdon, 1995) to explain how groups can get involved in policy formulation at certain points in time – these windows, according to Kingdon, are influenced by different factors such as perceptions of the problem, as well as elections and changes of governments that result in policy reforms. Even with these opportunity openings, those groups that can form “advocacy coalitions” ultimately may find it easier to call the attention of policy makers, as these coalitions are composed of a larger group of people mobilizing for the same cause (Birkland, 2007, p. 69).

Further factors include the general acceptance by society of the issue as important (more likely to occur if something similar has already been assimilated as significant), the mass media, the role of the public, and issue perception by the (potential) beneficiaries that needs to be specifically defined and easy to grasp, enjoy public support, and require relatively low costs to solve (Burstein, 1991, p. 334-335).

As we have seen, we will be looking at how problems come to feature in the public and formal agendas (Cobb et al.), a process in which organizations and causal stories (Birkland, 2007; Burstein, 1991) play an important role. By applying the organizational and cultural domains (Burstein, 1991), we will trace issue paths from the general agenda universe through the systemic, institutional, and decision agendas (Birkland, 2007) motivated mostly by outside initiatives (Cobb et al., 1976) but taking into account factors such as government openness (Kingdon, 1995), usefulness for those in power, public acceptance, and issue perception (Birkland, 2007).
Next, we will see a type of policy that has made it onto government agendas worldwide, although in different ways and for different reasons, but with the general objective of achieving more equal access to resources for those who have been disadvantaged in some way.

**Affirmative Action: Concepts, Types, Controversy, and Examples**

This section details the origins, concepts, types, and controversies surrounding affirmative action (also known as preferential policies), a type of policy which in general has aimed for redressing past wrongs by increasing social inclusion of excluded groups, as we will see in brief. Authors who have researched these programs in detail are Skrentny (1996), Rubio (2001), Kranz (2002), and Anderson (2004) who retrace the history of affirmative action; Kellough (2006) and Anderson (1998) who analyse different types of preferential policies as well as arguments in favor and against; Sowell (2004) who has investigated the international forms of this type of plan, and takes a very critical view towards them; and Sabbagh (2004), who looks at policies from a legal standpoint. After having outlined these principles, we will take a closer look at examples of affirmative action, legislation, and programs that different countries have implemented, starting with India, South Africa, and Malaysia, then honing in on Latin America to look at Brazil, Uruguay, Ecuador, Colombia, Honduras, and Panama, all of which have affirmative action programs for minorities and especially Afro-descendants; in the next section, we will move on to analyse present affirmative action modalities existing in Argentina.

**Affirmative Action Explained**

Affirmative action, also known as preferential policies, is typically associated with policies directed at fairness in labor, as the earliest programs put in place in the United States of
America were related to employment (Rubio, 2001; Kellough, 2006; Sowell, 2004); over time however, the term has broadened in scope (Rubio, 2001).

According to Kellough (2004, p. 3), affirmative action policies are “a variety of strategies designed to enhance employment, educational, or business opportunities for groups such as racial or ethnic minorities and women, who have suffered discrimination.” As Sabbagh (2004, p. 1) explains, these policies go further than antidiscrimination measures and target “deeply entrenched social practices that reproduce group-structured inequality even in the absence of intentional discrimination.”

The policies have different names in different countries; “affirmative action” in the U.S.A., “positive discrimination” in the United Kingdom and India, or “standardization” in Sri Lanka (Sowell, 2004). In the international context, types of preferential programs differ depending on whom they target, whether or not they require “quotas”, and the kind of legal mandate substantiating the requirements (Sabbagh, 2004, p. 1). The concept of affirmative action is in fact frequently associated with mandates of minority numbers in employment and education because of their highly publicized, controversial nature (Kellough, 2006, p. 7).

As Anderson (1998) recounts, among affirmative action policies are those that a) seek to roll back institutionalized standards reliant on “ascriptive group-based disadvantage” as well as its effects, b) those that further community inclusion, integration, and diversity, and c) those that actively select people for preferential treatment in designated spaces (such as the workplace or educational institutions) on the basis of “ascriptive identities (race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.).”
Kellough (2006, p. 11) provides two categories of affirmative action policies, the “individual-based” and the “group-based” approaches, as they developed in the U.S.A. over the last 60 years. First, the “individual-based” or “reactive” policies are based on antidiscrimination tenets and represent the early forms of affirmative action policies. These include laws and measures to combat discrimination, as well as systems for reviewing complaints. The second category, “group-based, ‘proactive’ policies”, better known directly as affirmative action, branches into the “early approaches” and the “preferential” or numerical approaches. The early forms focus on “upward mobility programs”, equality of opportunity, career development, and the removal of barriers for minorities and women in employment. The preferential approach, as it suggests, focuses on the attainment of goals and timetables targeting specific groups of people, which could either be voluntary or obligatory (court-ordered) (Kellough, 2006, p. 11).

The preferential type of group-based approach, because it goes beyond “equality of opportunity and nondiscrimination in a strict sense” (Kellough, 2006, p. 11), can be considered as the more “aggressive” (p. 10) or “extreme” (Htun, 2004, p. 60) form of affirmative action and is consequently the most controversial today. Before taking a closer look at the controversies, however, we will now turn to an overview of the origins of preferential policies.

*The Origins of Affirmative Action*

The origins of affirmative action, as well as their application in different countries, are varied (Sowell, 2004; Sabbagh, 2004). Scholars who have researched the history of affirmative action have tended to focus on the U.S.A. (Anderson, 2004; Kellough, 2006; Kranz, 2002; Rubio, 2001), although Sowell (2004) points out that in some countries such as India, affirmative action has existed “longer than in the United States” (p. 1). Preferential policies arose within
different contexts in those countries that have adopted them, but what they have in common is that they intend to combat a condition of (often historical) inequality or as retribution for past wrongs, with a central motivation being the search for “how to justly govern and develop heterogeneous populations” by addressing “economic inequalities in a context of globalization” (Crichlow, 2012). While some countries focus on caste disparities (such as India) or disadvantaged populations (such as the indigenous Bumiputeras in Malaysia), others focus on reversing forms of domination resulting from colonialism with a strong emphasis on civil rights, as is the case particularly in Brazil, Colombia, South Africa, the U.S.A, and additional Latin American countries (Crichlow, 2012). For our purpose, it will be useful to look at the history of affirmative action in the U.S.A. The focus here is mostly on minorities specifically African Americans, although the developments are likewise significant in the case of women’s rights and affirmative action for women.

As Kranz (2002) points out, the Declaration of Independence of the U.S.A. in 1777 did not mention women or slaves, and the Constitution at that time explicitly excluded them, giving rise to a method of reversing this “history of discrimination”: affirmative action (Kranz, 2002, pp. 3-4).

Originally, the idea of affirmative action came from “a centuries-old English legal concept of equity” (Skrentny, 1996, p.6) much like case law, where justice depends on what is fair in a specific case. Focusing on U.S. history, Rubio (2001) argues that in order to understand

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19 The definition of minority here is taken as “a cultural, ethnically, or racially distinct group that coexists but is subordinate to a more dominant group” whereby the “subordinancy is the chief defining characteristic of a minority group” whose “status does not necessarily correlate to population” (Minority, 2014).

present-day affirmative action and the discussions around it, we need to understand the history of race relations in the U.S.A. and describes how the stage was set for affirmative action policies to ultimately take shape early on in colonial North America. He traces them back to the early years of the Americas under slavery when whites were increasingly in control and had rising social mobility, whereas blacks and other enslaved and indentured people did not experience those conditions (pp. 1-4). Over time, Rubio recounts, even though slaves and indentured servants included whites, blacks, indigenous people and others, the labor issues of whites were more likely to be protected legislatively than for other workers, forming an ever-more entrenched dichotomy assuming that blacks were slaves and whites were not (p. 9). Rubio (2001) argues that in order to understand present-day affirmative action and the discussions around it, we need to understand the history of race relations in the U.S.A.

Just after the Civil War of 1861-1865, during Reconstruction21, which Rubio (2001, p. 32) calls “America’s first affirmative action program”, Congress adopted a series of welfare programs for blacks and created the Bureau of Freedmen’s Affairs in 1865 to oversee the policies (Schnapper, 1985) in the formulation of which abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass, Major Martin Delaney, Charles Summer, and Thomas Higginson played a crucial role (Rubio, 2001, p. 36). In this connection, it is worth remembering that slavery had been abolished precisely in 1865, after the end of the civil war. Some bills containing preferential treatment existed even before the creation of the aforementioned Bureau; these targeted aged colored women, children in poverty, and created banks for former slaves, among others (Schnapper, 1985, p. 755). A year later in 1866, the Civil Rights Act was passed, which granted the same

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21 The period known as Reconstruction in U.S.A. history was a congressional and governmental effort to rebuild and unify the country and its society after the Civil War.
rights to all men as to white males “without distinction of race or color, or previous condition of slavery or involuntary servitude” (Frohnen, 2008), and equality before the law in other respects, including voting rights and citizenship status, the last of which overthrew the well-known “Dred Scott” Supreme Court ruling of 1857 deciding that blacks could not be citizens of the U.S.A. (Kranz, 2002, p. 6).

However, after Reconstruction was overthrown in 1877, the development of affirmative action reflected “not a passive atrophy of rights and civil rights protest but losing battles for equality that would eventually give birth to new forms of black-led protest and organization against white privilege” (Rubio, 2001, pp. 57-58). In 1883, the repeal of the 1875 Civil Rights act, which prohibited discrimination, opened the way for state legislatures (primarily the Southern states) to pass what are known as “Jim Crow” laws of segregation, which “kept people of color out of white schools, jobs, movie theaters, and restaurants, as well as away from the voting booth, off juries, and out of political office” (Kranz, 2002, p. 7): these laws lasted well into the 1940s.

In the midst of the Great Depression however, things began to slowly change. In 1933, Harold Ickes, the then Secretary of the Interior under President Franklin Roosevelt, issued an order within the Public Works Administration which forbade discrimination in that entity’s projects (Anderson, 2004, p. 12) even though implementing and enforcing it turned out to be difficult (p. 13). According to Anderson (2004, p. 15), at that time, i.e. during the New Deal under President Roosevelt, the U.S. government was “increasing its protection of some citizens” (primarily workers and youth). Consequently, this is the period when the actual term “affirmative action” was first used in the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, also known as the “Wagner
Act” after its sponsor Senator Robert Wagner. This act allowed workers to form unions and demand improved salaries as a group – in its wording, the Act called for “affirmative action” to be taken by adjusting wages to what they would be if discrimination had not occurred (Skrentny, 1996; Anderson, 2004).

While these changes were taking place in government and federal institutions, changes were under way among African Americans as well, as the civil rights movement began to take shape. W.E.B. Du Bois founded the Niagara movement in 1905 and later created the NAACP (the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) along with white activists (Kranz, 2002, p. 10), setting a course for further changes.

Starting with the creation by President Truman of the Committee on Governmental Contract Compliance in 1953, the highlight of the civil justice movement as focusing on equal opportunity was between 1954 and 1964, culminating with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned all forms of discrimination, as well as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Kranz, 2002; Pojman, 1992). During those years, the court ruling handed down in the “Brown vs. Board of Education” case in 1954 ended segregation by overturning the 1869 “Plessy vs. Ferguson” ruling. Later in 1961, President John F. Kennedy issued Executive Order 10925 creating the EEOC (the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) to provide equal employment opportunities by mandating that “affirmative action” be undertaken to ensure employment and treatment “without regard to race, creed, color, or national origin” (Kranz, 2002; Sowell; 2004; Skrentny, 1996).

What is interesting to note here is that affirmative action policies seem to have materialized somewhat almost on their own; both Pojman (1992) and Skrentny (1996) point out
that affirmative action measures were implemented in a specific context with neither outspoken activism in support, nor with outright opposition. In the early 1960s at the onset of the civil rights movement, it was considered radical or even taboo to speak of anything more assertive than the color blind model and the concept of equality, because broaching that territory may have resulted in a loss of political legitimacy (Skrentny, 1996, p. 3); the more “mainstream” civil rights groups actually supported color blind conceptions (p. 2). Public opinion was a factor when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, as were race riots in the 1960s after the apparent failure of the preceding non-discrimination approaches (Kellough, 2006; Skrentny, 1996), the Cold War context, and an increasing international interest in human rights, all of which had implications for the government’s “crisis management” actions of broadening preferential measures (Skrentny, 1996, p. 14).

The 1960s and 1970s were when preferential policies for women and minorities picked up speed and were in “full swing” (Kranz, 2002, p. 18), as a 1968 executive order from President Johnson used the words “goals and timetables” and “representation” (Sowell, 2004, p. 5). In the case of women, the 1970s saw the “second wave” of activism, which focused on employment and education rights (the first having been in the abolitionist and suffrage movement) (Kranz, 2002, p. 17).

Under President Nixon, who established the Philadelphia Plan in 1969 to expand preferential measures of employers, as well as the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, which facilitated class action lawsuits and broadened the 1964 Civil Rights Act to include compliance by the private sector, state and local governments, as well as federal agencies, affirmative action became even more prominent in many rights-related policies (Kranz, 2002, pp. 
16-17), further strengthening the idea of having goals and timetables and gradually benefitting not only African Americans and women, but also “Hispanics, native Americans, Asian Americans, and handicapped people” (Pojman, 1992, p. 185).

As preferential policies became increasingly established, enforced, and implemented, a sense of injustice grew in those who felt they were put at a disadvantage over the many programs’ beneficiaries. In a famous, early court case in 1978, a prospective student at Davis School of Medicine, University of California, Alan Bakke, sued the school for not admitting him over other students who were accepted through affirmative action, and won the case in a blow to preferential policies at universities.

The precedents set by this case were far-reaching and are still used today. The opinions of the judges included conclusions on the need for a “compelling interest” (a well-justified reason for having the affirmative action measure), strict scrutiny (that the reason given for the compelling interest is indeed the only approach to realize the measure), and educational diversity (which one of the judges mentioned could be deemed a “compelling interest” argument); this case set the precedent for college affirmative action legal cases, which now invoke these three principles (Kranz, 2002, p. 19).

The Bakke case was the first of many private citizen initiatives and legislative proposals (Kellough, 2006, pp. 55-61), which sought to “limit, ban, or weaken” (p. 57) the use of affirmative action on the grounds that it was just another form of discrimination. As a result, the enactment of affirmative action policies became much more difficult in the 1980s and 1990s, as the more conservative Supreme Court appointments during the Reagan and Bush administrations during those two decades lead to many rulings against affirmative action, such as Proposition
209 in California in 1996 and Initiative 200 in the state of Washington in 1998. Similar rulings also arose from court cases in Georgia, Texas, and Michigan, to name a few (Kranz, 2002; Kellough, 2006). Not all ensuing court cases in the area of affirmative action resulted in rulings against these policies, however – in the case of Gutter vs. Bollinger in 2003, for example, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of affirmative action in education on the ground of increasing diversity. These developments reflect many setbacks, but also victories for affirmative action policy.

Kellough (2006) points out that, as long as discrimination is found to persist, these power plays for and against affirmative action will necessarily continue, because they have to do with redistributing access to goods and opportunities: those who benefit from affirmative action measures and those who feel they have been put at a disadvantage by them will either argue to continue the programs, or to do away with them, depending on where they stand. Let us now examine precisely these points of contention by exploring support, opposition, and investigations providing empirical evidence on both sides.

Controversy

As mentioned earlier, in the 1970s a shift began to evolve away from only equal opportunity to actual affirmative, positive measures for women and minorities, giving rise to increasing controversy. Even though most people would agree that historical inequalities and systemic injustice needs to be combatted and that the excluded need to be included, there is considerable debate over how best to do this (Kellough, 2006). The discussion over affirmative action mostly “centers on a conflict between two competing values (…): equality and liberty” where equality refers to equal opportunity, and liberty refers to the freedom for employers to
choose the best available candidates (Kellough, 2006, p. 75) reflecting an appeal for “color blind” policies and justice (Skrentny, 1996).

A famous speech by President Lyndon B. Johnson, pointed out by both Kellough (2006) and Anderson (2004), exemplifies the beginnings of the shift to preferential policies. Defending these developments, President Johnson said in his Commencement address at Howard University in 1965, “You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him to the starting line of a race, and then say, ‘you are free to compete with all the others,’ and still justly believe you have been completely fair” (Johnson, 1965).

There are a series of arguments for and against the need for affirmative-type preferential treatment. The arguments in favor of such measures are positioned from the points of view of justice (as retribution for past injustices), democracy (as expanding representation and as a requirement for a democratic society), social utility (as a way to reach disadvantaged groups), and diversity (to increase diversity of discourse in educational institutions) (Anderson, 1998) as well as in the workplace; Kellough (2006) refers to this last argument as “utilitarian” (p. 78), whereby proponents argue that diversity increases accountability and organizational effectiveness as it is enhanced by different perspectives.

The justice-based arguments for affirmative action can be broken down into three types: “compensatory (backward-looking), discrimination-blocking (present-oriented), and integrative (forward-looking)” where backward-looking policies focus on reparation and continuing inequalities due to past discrimination, discrimination-blocking policies counteract any systems in place which discriminate by taking measures to revert them without addressing the causes, and
integrative policies use integration aiming “for a future in which these causes no longer operate” (Anderson, 1998).

As mentioned earlier, the crux of the discussion over preferential policies lies in the way equality is conceived. Kellough (2006, pp. 83-92) identifies five core arguments against affirmative action. The first objection is that these policies “violate core American values” of self-reliance (p. 83) – in other words, they go against the idea that a society is made up of individuals who should be evaluated by a color blind justice system on the basis of merit; the counter-argument from proponents in this case is that groups also suffer discrimination, so it is indeed necessary to target groups.

The second, broadly argued complaint, is that preferential programs actually benefit the wrong people because they often create advantages for those who do not need them (Kellough, 2006; Sowell, 2004). Not only do certain groups within a group benefit more than others, namely the ‘more advantaged’ of a given disadvantaged group thereby generating an uneven distribution of advantages to beneficiaries (Sowell, 2004), but as a consequence it could also result in a less qualified member of a minority being hired or accepted to a university for instance, over a more qualified white male (Kellough, 2006, p. 86). Supporters would counter that affirmative action is meant to change widespread behavior in general, not only individual cases (Kellough, 2006, p. 86).

The third point Kellough mentions is the retort that affirmative action is simply “reverse discrimination” (p. 86) and that it harms white men as it sets them at a disadvantage over minorities and women; Kellough attributes this to the approach of redistribution central to
preferential policies and uses Fish’s (1993) response that this complaint (inadequately) assumes that all parties in question were at the same level to begin with (pp. 128-36).

The fourth claim in opposition rests on the fact that preferences actually stigmatize beneficiaries, implying that they are undeserving of the advantages granted because all other things being equal, they would not qualify for them on the basis of merit alone, while the fifth and last objection posits that it is no longer needed because minorities and women have already made significant advances (Kellough, 2006, p. 89).

This last criticism leads us to an additional dissenting point on the duration of policies originally intended as temporary. Using the example of India, where the “reservation” system of educational quotas launched in 1949 had a 10 year limit yet is still in place today, Sowell (2004, p. 3) points out that even though most countries using affirmative action have provided for wording and definitions ensuring the “temporary” and “limited” nature of these policies, those countries have found it difficult to control their time frame and scope once such policies were implemented.

Next we will look at some examples of scholars who have argued for and against affirmative action from different viewpoints, starting with four in opposition, followed by four in support of these policies.

Among the salient opposition figures in the field of preferential policy measures are Glazer (1975); Pojman (1992); Rothman, Lipset, and Nevitte (2003); and Sowell (2004). Glazer (1975) criticizes affirmative action for violating the color blind values of the U.S.A.,

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arguing that the laws enacted during and after the civil rights movement will eventually equalize society so that preferential policy will not be needed. Later in 1997 however, Glazer wrote We Are All Multiculturalists Now, in which he analyzes the rise of multiculturalism as a result of the poor results from antidiscrimination measures to fully integrate African Americans and minorities.

Rothman et al. (2003) critically evaluate survey-taking methods on affirmative action issues, arguing that they are overly subjective (p. 29) and therefore designed a survey that does not take results “at face value” (p. 30). Rothman et al. found that diversity on university campuses does not have the advantages it is said to have, as they found higher diversity to be proportional to higher incidents of discrimination, as well as “tension and dissatisfaction” (p. 38) experienced by students.

In what is perhaps the most comprehensive collection of criticism towards these policies from an international perspective, Sowell (2004), in Affirmative Action Around the World: An Empirical Study, cites an overwhelming lack of empirical studies focusing on the effects of preferred treatment and analyzes different cases of broader consequences of preferential policies in several countries: India, Malaysia, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and U.S.A. Sowell concludes that, that in most cases, they may do more harm than good because they benefit the wrong people at best, and cause societal tensions or even ethnic conflicts at worst.

Finally, Pojman (1992) argues against affirmative action by providing a historical overview of its trajectory in the U.S.A., presents criticisms to each argument in favor, and concludes that “weak” affirmative action (i.e. the elimination of segregation or scholarships for minorities) too easily becomes the “strong” type (in other words, quotas, percentages in hiring
and education) (p. 183) which in his opinion promote “mediocrity, inefficiency, and resentment” (p. 204).

On the other hand, some of the important cases for affirmative action have been presented by Anderson (2002); Fish (1993); Holzer & Neumark (2000a, 2000b); and Weisskopf (2004).\footnote{For further literature in favor of affirmative action policy, please consult Sabbagh’s (2007) *Equality and Transparency, A Strategic Perspective on Affirmative Action in American Law*; Bowen and Bok’s (1998) *The shape of the river: Long-term consequences of considering race in college and university admissions*; Bergmann’s (1996) *In Defense of Affirmative Action*; and Edley’s (1998) *Not All Black and White: Affirmative Action and American Values*.} Holzer & Neumark (2000a), in their assessment of studies focusing on the economics of affirmative action, find that there are no significant empirical shortcomings of these policies when it comes to efficiency. Likewise in another study, Holzer & Neumark (2000b) find that the affirmative action does not result in hiring “less qualified or less productive” (p. 269) minorities and women, so in fact employers who apply affirmative action are less likely to commit “statistical discrimination” (p. 269) as they are more rigorous at screening and evaluating, use formal rather than informal evaluation methods, and more often provide training to new hires.

Similarly, in focusing on preferential treatment in India and the U.S.A., Weisskopf (2005) finds that in the “most important objective” of affirmative action policies, which is to “bring about greater ethnic integration of society’s elite, on the reasonable premise that society functions more efficiently, more equitably, more democratically, and more harmoniously if its professional, managerial, academic, and political elite is ethnically well integrated,” (p. 244) the policies are mostly successful.

Additionally, Fish (1993) provides a concise critique of the accusation that affirmative action is only another version of discrimination, arguing that this retort does not take history into
proper account, and that criticism in defense of merit-based evaluation does not adequately account for persisting barriers to equal opportunity.

Lastly, Anderson (2002) argues that affirmative action should aim for racial integration because it can create a more democratic society and roll back existing barriers on the basis of racial characteristics, pointing out that policies addressing integration are more useful than those dealing with retribution and compensation (backward-looking types) (p. 1195).

Some Country Examples

Several countries have implemented affirmative action programs. These measures exist in different versions in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Fiji, Honduras, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Russian Federation, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Uruguay and the U.S.A. (Crichlow, 2012; Hernández, 2013; Pascale, 2010; Sowell, 2004). Here we will look at examples and legislation in some of the countries listed including India, Malaysia, South Africa and the U.S.A., after which we will focus on the main countries in Latin America which have varied affirmative action policies in place for Afro-descendants (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama and Uruguay). Subsequently, we will examine the case of Argentina, where currently there are mechanisms of preferential treatment only for certain groups, primarily women, indigenous people, and handicapped people (Becerra, 2010; Pascale, 2010).

South Africa

In South Africa, the 1996 Constitution includes measures of affirmative action (Adam, 1997). Mandating that all citizens are equal before the law and have equal protection, in addition
to a clause on nondiscrimination on the basis of ascriptive characteristics, the constitution specifically declares that “to promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken” and that “national legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination” in Chapter 2, Bill of Rights, Section 9 on Equality of the South African Constitution adopted on May 8th, 1996 (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The Employment Equity Act (EEA) of 1998 established affirmative action for employers by mandating that “every designated employer must, in order to achieve employment equity, implement affirmative action measures for people from designated groups (...) [in order] to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels of the workforce” and in Section 15, Article 3, specifically calls for “preferential treatment and numerical goals” (EEA, 2014). Importantly, Section 27 of this act directs employers to provide information on the “remuneration and benefits in each occupational category” detailed by race and gender (EEA, 2014). In order to fulfill these goals, the EEA requires employers to develop an employment equity plan in consultation with unions and other agencies, which they then submit to the Department of Labour (EEA FAQ, 2009).

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was proposed by the government of Nelson Mandela in 1994 to begin a series of post-Apartheid social and economic reforms, including the implementation of civil rights aspects of the new Constitution concerning affirmative action (Lindsay, 1997). In the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development (RDP, 1994), the RDP suggests policies stressing the need for attention to the sectors of human
resources and education in order to achieve more equitable employment and decreasing inequality (RDP, 1994).

In terms of education, within the RDP, the White Paper 3 on education states that in South Africa, there is a need “to redress past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities” and specifically in Point 2.28, states that “the Ministry [of Education] will require institutions to develop their own race and gender equity goals and plans for achieving them, using indicative targets for distributing publicly subsidized places rather than firm quotas” (CHE, 1997, p. 16) thereby instructing South African universities to formulate preferential plans.

India

India has had affirmative action policies (known as “reservation”) long before other countries when it was still a British colony, although they were not provided for in the Constitution until India’s independence in 1947 (Sabbagh, 2004; Sowell 2004). Sowell (2004, pp. 23-24) finds that there are two types of affirmative action policies targeting disadvantaged groups in India; one targets the “Untouchables” (also known as “scheduled castes,” Harijans, or Dalits) while the second is directed towards other, underprivileged tribal groups referred to as “other backward classes.”

In Article 15 on equality, referring to education, the Constitution of India states that “nothing in this article (...) shall prevent the State from making any special provision, by law, for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for
the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes or for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes in so far as such special provisions relate to their admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions (...)” while Article 46 assures that “special care” will be taken regarding the “educational and economic interests of the weaker sections” of the population (Constitution of India, 2007).

India has reservation for castes, gender, and religion; for caste, primarily for seats in parliament and for education, with university reservations at 7 percent for Scheduled castes, 14 percent for Scheduled Tribes; these two aforementioned categories, along with “other backward classes,” carry 48 percent reservation in universities (Sekhri, 2011).

Malaysia

Malaysia has implemented affirmative action policies to reduce the economic disparities between indigenous Malays, and ethnic Chinese and Indian Malaysians who were more prosperous, even though native Malays had some preferences under British rule prior to Malaysia’s independence in 1957 (Sowell, 2004).

While guaranteeing nondiscrimination and equality before the law, Article 8 of the 1957 Constitution (including all amendments up to 2009) also stipulates the advancement of Malays (also known as Bumiputras, or “sons of the soil”) (Sowell, 2004, p. 59) under the principle, stated in Clause 5c, that the article does not prohibit “any provision for the protection, well-being or advancement of the aboriginal peoples of the Malay Peninsula (including the reservation of land) or the reservation to aborigines of a reasonable proportion of suitable positions in the public service”, later specifying in Article 153 that the “reservation of quotas in respect of
services, permits, etc., for Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak”, as well as the granting of scholarships, are expressly protected by the constitution (Constitution of Malaysia, 2009). Further, Article 89 provides for land rights for Malays. These provisions set a clear preference for, and recognition of, native Malays to gain access to privileges and economic benefits.

The “harder” affirmative action policies did not appear until after 1969, however. When the United Malay Nationalist Organization (UNMO) – representing Indian and Chinese ethnic groups won – elections that year, riots broke out from opposed Malays resulting in high casualties and bloodshed, prompting the government to announce the National Economic Policy (NEP) to quell the anger, finally launching it in 1971 (Sowell, 2004, p. 60). As a result of the NEP, Malays now had quotas for corporate licenses and permits, special advisory services for entrepreneurs, and measures aiming for 30 percent ownership of shares in businesses by native Malays (Sabbagh, 2004).

**Brazil**

Moving over to Latin American countries, Brazil currently has affirmative action policies related to health, employment, culture, and most prominently, education. In the field of health, the Ministry of Health launched a plan called “Brasil Afroatitude” in 2005 with universities using preferential policies, applying a diversity perspective to its objective of raising awareness about HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (Governo retoma articulação, 2008). In employment, the Ministry of Agricultural Development implements two programs: *Projeto Terra Negra Brasil* which supports Afro-Brazilian small farmers and *Programa de Promoção da Igualdade de*
Gênero, Raça e Etnia which promotes the inclusion and land rights of Afro-Brazilians and indigenous people from quilombos (MDA, 2014). In culture, capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian martial art, was declared as cultural heritage in 2009 (IPHAN, 2010).

Lastly, many of Brazil’s affirmative action programs lie in the field of education. One of these measures, the Program for Affirmative Action and Social Inclusion (PAAIS) attempts to counter the exclusion created by the public school system by awarding students who obtain a secondary diploma at a public school with 30 points, afro-descendants receiving an additional 10 points, towards the second phase of the final university entrance exam. This intends to compensate for a system which, by nature, reproduces and exacerbates inequalities (Proença Bonilha, 2009, p. 1); the majority of students graduate from public schools, but this is not reflected in universities, as public school graduates represent a minority in institutions of higher learning (Osava, 2006).

The government also implemented a system of quotas for public universities in 1999, known as Projeto de lei 73, whereby the institutions reserve quotas for afro-descendants that are proportional to the percentage of afro-descendants in the country (PL 73/1999, 2014), as well as a scholarship system for private universities using the percentage results of censuses by state known as PRO-ÚNI (PROUNI, 2014) and for those Afro-Brazilians who are preparing for the entrance examination to begin a diplomatic career (PAA, 2014). On another level, funding is also provided specifically to those federal or state universities which promote the training of teachers and educators in basic education, and in planning curricula and pedagogical materials in accordance with the National Program of Affirmative Action. In addition, support and funding is provided for institutions and universities that have departments of Afro-Brazilian Studies through
the NEAB (Núcleo de Estudos Afro-Brasileiros) network (Pascale, 2010, p. 41). An additional program implemented in 2008, Lei 10.639, reformed school curricula to include an obligatory subject on Afro-Brazilian history and culture (Lei 10.639/03, 2014) and launched UNIAFRO to train professors who teach that subject.

**Uruguay**

In Uruguay, three types of policies concerning education are currently in place. One is directed by the Ministry of the Interior and the Higher Institute of Afro Training (Instituto Superior de Formación Afro) consisting of training the police force on the country’s African heritage, and holding discrimination workshops and introduction classes to Afro-Uruguayan culture and history, as well as incorporating a separate obligatory subject in police academies (OMA, 2011). A further policy in education is similar to those in Brazil and Colombia – a scholarship fund with preferential admission for afro-descendent students wishing to pursue undergraduate and graduate studies (Becas Carlos Quijano, 2011). In terms of cultural policies, December 3rd was declared National Day of Candombe, Afro-Uruguayan Culture, and Racial Equality through Ley 18.059 passed in 2006, in recognition of the traditional candombe practices of African origin (Ley 18.059, 2006).

Most recently, on September 4, 2013, the Uruguayan Congress passed Ley 19.122, the Affirmative Action for Afro-descendant Populations Act, which mandates the formulation and implementation of public policies geared towards Afro-descendants, setting aside 8 percent of public sector positions, providing for scholarship quotas, and mandating the incorporation of related subjects in school curricula (Ley 19.122, 2013).
With funding from the Ministry of Housing of Uruguay, the UFAMA al Sur initiative (which is a group of women’s cooperatives), headed by Afro-descendant women, developed a series of housing projects for affordable housing and improved living conditions geared towards Afro-descendants (Cooperative UFAMA al Sur, 2006).

Ecuador

On May 22, 2006, the Congress of Ecuador passed the “Black or Afro-Ecuadorian Collective Rights Act” (Ley de Derechos Colectivos del Pueblo Negro o Afroecuatoriano) which guarantees collective economic, social, cultural, and political rights of Afro-Ecuadorians, establishes their cultural traditions as part of the nation’s cultural heritage, recognizes Afro-Ecuadorians’ territorial rights, and in the educational aspect, calls for the formulation of “ethnoeducation” policies, the awarding of scholarships for Afro-Ecuadorian students through the Ecuadorian Educational Credit and Scholarship Institute, known as IECE in Spanish, and the creation of a National Pedagogical Commission for Afro-Ecuadorian issues within the Ministry of Education and Culture (Ley 46, 2006; 2013).

In Ecuador’s Constitution of 2008, Article 11.2 provides that “the state will adopt affirmative action measures that promote equality in favor of those rights holders who find themselves in a situation of inequality” (Constitution of Ecuador, 2008, p. 21).

The national government established the CODAE (Corporación de Desarrollo Afroecuatoriano) on June 16th 2005, a public entity whose mission is to “encourage comprehensive, sustainable development with an identity, strengthening the organization of the Afro-Ecuadorian people, aiming to eradicate racism and discrimination” (CODAE, 2014). This
agency implements policies in education in the form of scholarships for Afro-Ecuadorian lawyers who specialize in Afro-Ecuadorian human rights issues, and housing programs for this population (CODAE, 2014). Through the CODAE, Executive Order No. 60 of September 18, 2009 created the Plurinational Plan to Eliminate Racial Discrimination and Ethnic and Cultural Exclusion which includes articles on affirmative action in employment for Afro-Ecuadorians and indigenous people with representation of “a percentage not less than the proportion of its population,” one on preferences for those populations regarding public sector positions, and one to “resignify and include” important Afro-Ecuadorian and indigenous persons on public and national monuments (Decreto 60, 2009).

Also, the Development Plan for Afro-Ecuadorians, 2007-2010 established 9 policies with several programs each, focusing on health, housing, employment, access to loans, property rights, human rights, education, cultural rights, and strengthening civil society organizations (Plan de Desarrollo, 2010) for Afro-Ecuadorians.

**Colombia**

Within Latin America, Colombia was one of the first countries to launch affirmative action policies starting with the 1991 Constitution, which “recognizes and protects the ethnic diversity” of Colombia (Article 7), states in Article 13 that “the state will promote conditions in order for equality to be real and effective and will adopt measures in favor of groups that are discriminated against or marginalized” (Constitution of Colombia, 1991). The 1991 Constitution, along with Ley 70 of 1993, are the basis for many of the affirmative policies for Afro-Colombians which include measures in education and territorial and property rights to collective
land titles (León & Holguín, 2005). In terms of political representation, Article 171 of the Constitution guarantees two seats for indigenous people and three for other “political minorities” (Constitution of Colombia, 1991). The implications of designing and carrying out preferential policies in Colombia are complex due to (lengthy military conflict etc.) and its consequences of displacement affecting minorities and especially Afro-descendants in a disproportionate manner.\(^{24}\)

In education, affirmative action policies for Afro-Colombians include a system of quotas, scholarships, and Afro-Colombian studies. For instance, besides providing for Afro-Colombian land rights, Ley 70 passed in 1993 (Ley 70, 1993) also provides funding to Afro-Colombian studies with the objective of incorporating the teaching of the cultural, historical, political, and geographic legacy of Afro-Colombian communities in primary and secondary schools and “all curricular activities” (Cátedra Afrocolombiana, 2014).

In the 1990s, several universities began implementing quotas first for indigenous people and then for Afro-Colombians (Hernández, 2013). For example, the ICETEX (Educational Credit Institute for Technical Studies in the Exterior) has implemented a program that facilitates access to higher education for afro-descendant and indigenous populations in the form of scholarships and funding for higher education for students from these groups (ICETEX, 2014).

The previously mentioned institute’s Educational Credit Program for Afro-Colombian

Communities provides funding per semester for undergraduate and graduate studies (including a stipend) within technical fields, as well as merit scholarships on the basis of project proposals related to social work (ICETEX, 2014).

As an example of local policies, Bogotá implemented a “Comprehensive plan of affirmative action” in 2008, recognizing the cultural diversity and guaranteeing the rights of Afro-Colombians in Bogotá (PIAA, 2008).

**Honduras**

Executive order No. 330-2002 declares April as “African Heritage Month” in Honduras, during which there are cultural events showcasing African traditions and influences in the country. Subsequently in 2007, the Honduran government under President José Manuel Zelaya Rosales issued Executive Order 09-2007 during African Heritage Month that year, which included affirmative action measures (Decreto Ejecutivo PCM-09-2007, 2009). Under the section for “social development,” Article 5 mandates the creation of a scholarship for students in the secondary and university levels, and Article 6 the continuation of existing programs for Garífunas25 which are in course or pending. Within the cultural measures, Articles 7 calls for artistic training and sports facilities for Afro-Hondurans respectively, and Article 3 instructs the Department of Culture, Arts and Sports within the State Secretariat to provide technical and financial assistance for the artistic and cultural activities of the Afro-Honduran community, specifically referring to their “needs as the main victims of racism and social exclusion” (Decreto Ejecutivo PCM-09-2007, 2009, own translation). In terms of territorial rights, Article 4 instructs

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25 Afro-Honduran and indigenous population. According to Merriam-Webster, “a member of a people of African and American Indian descent that live mainly along the Caribbean coast of northern Central America” (Garífuna, 2014).
the National Agrarian Institute to “investigate and solve the conflictive situation of Garífuna lands and territories, with respect to titles, sanitation, expansion, and protection of the lands of the Afro-Honduran and Misquita26 communities” (Decreto Ejecutivo PCM-09-2007, 2009, own translation).

Panama

On May 30, 2000, the Panamanian government passed Ley 9 and declared May 30 to be National Black Ethnicity Day (Día de la Etnia Negra Nacional) which pays tribute to Afro-Panamanians and stipulates that public and private educational entities hold events each year on that day (Día de la Etnia Negra, 2000). Two years later, the CONEGPA (Coordinadora Nacional de las Organizaciones Negras Panameñas) submitted a proposal to the Panamanian Ministry of Education to include subject matter on Afro-descendants in school curricula, however it has not yet been incorporated. Five years later, Executive Order No. 124 (Decreto 124) issued on May 27, 2005, created the “Special Commission to establish a governmental policy for the full inclusion of black ethnic Panamanians” (Decreto Ejecutivo No. 124, 2005). An additional antidiscrimination law, Ley 16, was passed in 2002 and “regulates the right of admission in public establishments and dictates measures against discrimination” (Ley 16, 2002).

In sum, we have seen how preferential policies gained prominence in the U.S.A. as a policy of redress and equal opportunity, what types of programs and controversies these mechanisms entail, and a series of examples from an international viewpoint, ending with an overview of Latin American countries and their respective policies taking Afro-descendants into

26 “A member of an American Indian people of the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua and Honduras” (Miskito, 2014).
account. An additional country in the region to be contemplating affirmative action policies for Afro-descendants, both at the grassroots and governmental level, is Argentina; we will now examine Argentina’s antidiscrimination legislation, governmental agencies, and the beginnings of at least a soft form of affirmative action which until now focuses on recognition of the Afro-descendant population.

**Anti-discrimination and Affirmative Action in Argentina**

Argentina considers anti-discrimination measures and legislation to be important, recognizing them in its constitution and legislative activities, and has made advances in acknowledging Afro-Argentines over the past few years; however, there has not been a specific focus on Afro-descendants in social policy yet (Becerra, 2010; Gomes, 2012; Pascale, 2010). The governmental agency INADI and the National Plan of Discrimination give prominence to issues of racism and are proposing and designing new policies for Afro-Argentines as well as other minorities. Besides existing affirmative action for women in parliament, and special university scholarships for disadvantaged students, more recently two laws have been passed in recognition of Afro-Argentines. In this section we will look at these items in more detail.

In terms of the number of human rights conventions signed, and human rights-related clauses in the Constitution, Argentina scores highly, having ratified a series of international treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.\(^{27}\) In a further step to strengthen these

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\(^{27}\) The international treaties covered in the Argentine Constitution as per Article 75, Section 22, are the following: the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the American Convention on Human Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the
adopted principles, the elimination of racism and discrimination in state discourse and practices have been on the Argentine government’s agenda since the 1994 Constitutional reforms, which amended human rights language to reflect those conventions (Romero, 2002). Most importantly, all international human rights treaties and conventions to which Argentina is a signatory received constitutional status after the mentioned reforms; as a result, they are above national and provincial laws, making Argentina the only country in the region to do so (Becerra, 2010, 76). Several articles make direct reference to human rights such as article 16, that protects equality before the law, and Article 75, Section 22, that recognizes the ethnic, racial, and cultural preexistence of indigenous populations in Argentina, as well as Section 23, promoting measures of affirmative action aimed at guaranteeing the adherence to human rights law (Argentine Constitution, 2010).

In the late 1980s, legislation supporting the social, cultural, economic development of disadvantaged populations specifying race or ethnic characteristics began to appear. In 1988, the Argentine Congress passed the first law penalizing all acts of discrimination (Ley 23.592), which was subsequently modified and updated in 1997 and again in 2002 (Becerra, 2010). Through that law, Argentina adopted “measures for those who arbitrarily impede the full exercise of the fundamental rights and guarantees recognized in the National Constitution” (Ley 23.592, 2002). Since its amendments in 1997 and 2002, Ley 23.592 now consists of 7 articles and sanctions those who infringe upon constitutional rights, in particular when those acts are committed on the

basis of “race, religion, nationality, ideology, political or syndical opinion, sex, economic position, social condition or physical characteristics” (Article 1), elevating the legal consequences for these acts (Article 2), and mandating between one month and three years in prison for engaging in propaganda or activities which dictate the superiority of one race over another (Article 3, Ley 23.592).

Further strengthening the aforementioned measure, Articles 4 and 5 added in 1997 (through the promulgation of ley 24.782) address the right to circulate in clubs and bars without discrimination, mandating that all public spaces are obligated to exhibit the 16th Article of the Constitution (which declares equality of all citizens before the law) along with the text of the law in question, adding the following text: “In the case of any discriminatory act, you can resort to the police authority and / or civil court on duty, who are required to take your complaint” (Ley 23.592, 2002). To enforce the previous two articles, Article 7, added through ley 25.608, imposes a fine of between 500 and 1000 Argentine pesos on public spaces found not to be in compliance with Articles 4 and 5.

To complement the legislation and constitutional amendments just described, the INADI (National Institute to Combat Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Racism) was created in 1995 as decreed by Law 24.515 and began its activities in 1997 as the government agency responsible for overseeing non-discrimination in Argentina. Operating under the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the INADI monitors human rights with respect to racism, oversees, implements, and monitors policies in this field, receives and coordinates complaints about racist acts, and coordinates with civil society organizations that combat racism (INADI, 2014).
The document titled *Towards a National Plan Against Discrimination* is a 373 page document containing a diagnosis of the state of racism in the country and a collection of 250 recommendations on how to combat it. The report finds that discrimination and racism is complex and continues to be pervasive in social spaces, for “ethnic, political, religious, economic” reasons and manifests as the “denial of basic rights of persons such as health, employment, education, security, respect for dignity and for cultural identity” (PNcD, 2014).

This plan, was drawn up in fulfillment of Argentina’s pledge at the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, 2001, to document racism on the basis of interviews with organizations, experts and victims across the country, and design proposals to combat racism (PNcD, 2014). Through executive order 1086 of 2005, the government adopted these proposals as encompassing national policy (PNcD, 2014).

The proposals are organized thematically along areas which need be addressed such as legislative reforms (legal recommendations), administration of justice and legislation, public administration, education, security forces, the media, and health, whereby each one has a set of strategic suggestions (along general lines), as well as immediate action suggestions (specific and more urgent) (Villalpando et al., 2005, p. 300). In particular, Point 63 of the proposals stresses the need for support of the activities carried out by indigenous, migrant, Afro-descendant, and other minority organizations, and to build their capacity of “citizen monitoring” of adherence to fundamental human rights (p. 310).

Further expanding the policy formulation aspect of Argentina’s antidiscrimination measures, on May 20th, 2008, the Federal Council for Anti-discriminatory Public Policy was formed within the INADI, whose purpose is to propose measures to strengthen the formulation
and implementation of antidiscrimination policies, with special attention to educational institutions and the workplace, and carry out the proposals of the previously described National Plan against Discrimination (Federal Council, 2014).

Regarding affirmative action, in 1991 Argentina passed the “women’s quota” law (known in Spanish as the “Ley de cupo femenino”) or Ley 24.012, mandating that at least 30 percent of party candidates to elections in the Chamber of Deputies had to be women, who at the time only represented 6 percent of the total members of that branch (Archenti, 1994); the law came into effect in 1993 (Caminotti, 2009). Later in 2001 the law also applied to candidacies in the Senate, when Senators were elected by direct vote from their respective provinces (Caminotti, 2009, p. 14).

The women’s quota law was indirectly enshrined in the Constitution through the reforms of 1994; Article 37, section 2 of the Argentine Constitution, by mandating equal opportunity between men and women, and guarantees affirmative action for women in political parties and the electoral regime. This clause is later strengthened by the already mentioned Article 75, section 23 of the Constitution requiring Congress to write and pass affirmative action laws mentioning “children, women, the aged, and persons with handicaps” but not other minorities specifically (Argentine Constitution, 2010).

There are three scholarship programs taking disadvantaged populations into account. The first program, the National Program of University Scholarships (Programa Nacional de Becas Universitarias, or PNBU) was approved and launched in 1996 by the Ministry of Education, under the Higher Education Law 24.521, aiming to give lower income students the possibility to attend universities and tertiary programs, as well as reduce dropout rates by emphasizing quality
and equity, but also clearly highlighting the merit-based character of scholarships focusing on the health sciences, social sciences, and humanities (Universidad para todos, 2014). In 2000, three subprograms were added to this policy, which included specific affirmative action measures for students belonging to indigenous groups, handicapped students, or low income “single offer” students whose career of choice was only offered at one university in the country and therefore would have to live elsewhere or commute over 200 kilometers (Amaro & Araujo, 2003).

The second program is the Bicentennial Scholarship program (Programa Nacional de Becas Bicentenario, known as PNBB), which has the same objective as the previously described PNBU, namely to assist and retain students in receiving university degrees, professorships, or technical degrees, except that it is aimed at students pursuing degrees in the hard sciences (applied, natural, exact, and medical) (Universidad para todos, 2014).

The third program is the newest. The Support Program for Argentine Students, dubbed PROG.R.E.S.AR, (Programa de Respaldo a Estudiantes de Argentina) is aimed at youth between 18 and 24 years of age who are neither working nor enrolled in any educational institution. Providing an annual stipend of 7200 Argentine pesos, the program targets disadvantaged young people wishing to begin, continue, or finish studies. (Universidad para todos, 2014).

As mentioned earlier, there are two laws pertaining to Afro-Argentines in particular. Recently in 2011 and 2013, two laws were passed designating October 11th and November 8th as “African-Argentine Culture Day” (Día de la Cultura Africano-Argentina) and “Afro-Argentine and Afro Culture Day” (Día Nacional de las/los afroargentinas/os y de la cultura afro) respectively. Later in this paper we will see the input of Afro-Argentine organizations in this process.
The legislation behind African-Argentine Culture Day contains two articles, one declaring the designation of October 11th as this day, and the second, to communicate this fact to the legislative branch (African-Argentine, 2011). This legislation pertains to the province of Buenos Aires, having been passed by the Senate and Chamber of Deputies of the capital of that province, La Plata. The justifications and background of the law highlight the necessity of recognizing the role of African culture in Argentina and Buenos Aires province specifically (Fundamentos, 2011).

By the same token, Ley 26.852, the Afro-Argentine and Afro Culture Day was passed by the Argentine Congress on May 20th, 2013 (Afro-Argentine, 2013). Containing five articles (of which the 5th communicates the law to the legislative branch), it designates the 8th of November for observing this day on a national level, in memory of María Remedios del Valle, a soldier in General Manuel Belgrano’s army whom he “ascended to Captain for her courage and bravery in the battlefield.”28 Article 2 mandates that this day be included in school calendars, and Article 3 charges the Ministry of Education to provide for the inclusion of this day as a topic in school curricula and to “promote afro culture” in schools. Finally, Article 4 requires the National Secretariat of Culture to give visibility and support to “afro culture” through public policy formulation.

It is important to note that most of the measures described were implemented from the 1990s onwards; as mentioned in the previous section when multiculturalism was addressed, many scholars would say this is no coincidence, since the late 1980s and early 1990s were a

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28 María Remedios del Valle, now known as the “Mother of the Nation,” was a black soldier in General Belgrano’s army who fought for Argentina’s independence, defending Buenos Aires from the British Invasion and fighting in the northern Battle of Tucumán; however, even during her lifetime she was gradually forgotten and passed away in poverty and abandon (Robledo, 2010, pp. 101-103).
period of profound political and social change in Latin America (but also the rest of the world). Many of these measures even being in existence in Argentina is at least partially credited to the reforms of this period, resulting from a confluence of factors including indigenous and black mobilization, transnational organizations, and even neoliberalism.

Two recent papers have examined the emergence of public policy for Afro-Argentines (Ocoró Loango, 2012; Otthenheimer & Zubrzycki, 2011). Otthenheimer & Zubrzycki (2011) find that Afro-Argentines were included in the public agenda through a specific kind of positioning, namely that of a long-discriminated group to whom reparations should be made from the part of the state. Taking a critical and skeptical stance towards the usefulness of the politics of difference, but without negating the fact that this group is indeed a victim of discrimination, the researchers are of the opinion that the figure of victim takes agency away from a group that really seems to be actively forging an identity, a culture (p. 7). These researchers also find that the reach of activities as well as policies continue to be very centralized (confined to the capital), having almost no reach in the rest of the nation (p. 8).

Ocoró Loango places current public policy for Afro-Argentines in the context of multicultural citizenship reforms and activism on the part of Afro-descendent civil society organizations in Argentina, suggesting that recently, organizations have begun to formulate public policies, have engaged in successful agenda setting and have broadened their possibilities, yet criticizes the fact that the demands of the organizations have not been clear.

Even though these studies are very recent (2011 and 2012 respectively), much has changed on the policy formulation arena within these organizations and also at the state level,
with concrete examples which point to an advance towards the existence of affirmative action policy for Afro-Argentines.

**The Afro-Argentine Community’s Moves Towards Visibility**

In spite of all the recent developments regarding mobilization and recognition, it remains difficult to estimate the size of the Afro-Argentine population.

In a 1778 census, 30% of Argentina’s population was Afro-Argentine; most lived in Buenos Aires, specifically in the districts of Barracas, Flores, Floresta, La Boca, and San Telmo (Andrews, 1989). In the 1806 census the Afro-Argentine population was also recorded at 30%, while by 1887 this percentage dwindled to a mere 1.8% (Cirio, 2010). In 2005, a pilot census in two neighborhoods of Buenos Aires, Monserrat and Santa Rosa de Lima, showed that they had 4.3% and 3.8% Afro-Argentines respectively (Cirio, 2010).

In national censuses, Argentina had not included questions directed towards Afro-Argentine populations since 1887 until 2010, when the following question regarding African ancestry was including: “Are you, or any other person in this home, afro-descendant, or do you have ancestors of afro-descendant or African heritage (father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, great-grandfather, great-grandmother?” (INDEC, 2012). According to the 2010 census results (the complete version of which was published a full two years later, on June 29th 2012) the population of African descendants in Argentina is 149,493 and therefore represents almost 0.4% of the total population. Of this number, 137,533 are Argentine-born and the remaining 11,960 were born in other countries (INDEC, 2012). Some controversies were pointed out and attributed to this census by members of the Afro-Argentine community, academics, and the media, because
the relevant question was only included in the expanded version of the census, which surveyed only one in every 10 households (Cirio, 2012).

The census shows that 67.9% of Afro-descendants in Argentina are between 15 and 64 years of age, which in Argentina is working age, and in general the population is found to be aging (INDEC, 2012). Of the total Afro-descendant population, 48.7% are men and 51.3% are women. Most Afro-descendants (39.1%) live in the Buenos Aires province, of which 25.6 percent live in the suburbs just outside the capital, and 13.5% in the interior of the province. Of the total Afro-descendant population, 12.9% reside in the capital city of Buenos Aires. Other provinces with large populations are (in descending order): Entre Ríos, Santa Fe, Córdoba, Mendoza, and Chubut (INDEC, 2012). Among the respondents, 94.6% live in houses or apartments (INDEC, 2012).

One of the biggest challenges for the formulation of policies targeted at the Afro-Argentine population is the lack of statistical information on the size and nature of the group (Cottrol, 2007), an essential component for successful policy-making. Most Latin American countries have been negligent in surveying the characteristics of populations for this purpose. Recently, international organizations such as the United Nations (more specifically ECLAC, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) and the Inter-American Development Bank have responded to the need for improving the structure of censuses. There is a growing demand for qualitative and quantitative socio-demographic information on indigenous and Afro-descendant populations. A 2010 IADB project offers capacity building to Latin American government institutions and census bureaus in order to better know the extent of exclusion and inequality, diagnose the socioeconomic and demographic panorama, build reliable
databases for public and private organizations, and draw up a socio-demographic atlas with the final aim of formulating social programs that “reduce poverty and promote equity” (IADB, 2010).

Since the early 1990s, there has been an increase in African immigrants to Argentina, most of whom are Senegalese or Nigerian, who come mostly to improve their economic situation and send remittances home (Zubrzycki, 2009; Le Monde Especial, 2009). Most are men, and many engage in street vending (jewelry and sunglasses), but also some professional activities (Zubrzycki, 2009). According to the Association of Senegalese Residents, there are over 1000 Senegalese citizens living in Argentina (Zubrzycki, 2009) and this figure could likely be more if we account for undocumented immigrants. News sources have quoted the total figure of African immigrants in Argentina to be between 5,000 and 10,000 (Downes, 2006). Between 2004 and 2008, 31% of asylum seekers in Argentina were African (Le Monde Especial, 2009).

The aim of this study is to contribute to the scholarly study of this rising visibility through the qualitative documenting of the Afro-Argentine organizations movements in the last years.

2. Afro-Argentine Organizations and Affirmative Action

2.1. The Afro-Argentine Organizations

This thesis explores the precedent considerations through fieldwork data consisting in semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, activists, and experts of the Afro-descendant community in Argentina, from March 2013 to December 2013, with the aim to approximate a picture of the organizational characteristics, as well as processes and phenomena in the field.
Interviewees were asked to speak freely on the basis of questions, to express their opinions, and describe and evaluate processes related to the field. The questions centered around the founding of the organization, its characteristics and members, its activities and their relation to policy developments, and the participants’ opinions on the current policy environment. Interviews aimed to discover forms of group identity and association, as well as contributions to affirmative action policy formulation, by focusing on the following points: a) activities and strategies used for shaping policy, b) individual characteristics of the organizations, c) personal experiences of the interviewed subjects, d) aspects of history and identity incorporated in the vision of the organizations, e) and opinions of the respondents on how the state is viewed, especially regarding to the dynamics and possibilities of affirmative action policy formulation.

The scope of this research in terms of time and resources, unfortunately, did not allow me to focus on organizations at the national level and in other regions of the country. I was however able to identify some of the organizations that are actively shaping the policy environment in Argentina, located in and around Buenos Aires, a sample which can be safely taken as relatively representative of the Afro-descendant community and its activities.

The organizations interviewed were Asociación Misibamba, Movimiento Afro-cultural, Agrupación Xangó, Asociación Civil África y su Diáspora, Asociación Civil ONIRA, Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos “Unión Caboverdeana”, and Instituto Argentino para la Igualdad, Diversidad e Integración (IARPIDI). These organizations were chosen because they are the most active and important in the Afro-descendant community. They represent the community’s diversity in Afro-Argentina: colonial-era descended, Cape-Verdean, Afro-Latin American immigrant, as well as African immigrant components of the larger community. Organizations
were identified on the basis of involvement in activities related to Afro-Argentine identity, directly or indirectly related to affirmative action policy formulation. The term “Afro-Argentine organizations” refers to those organizations (usually non-governmental, civil society organizations) that either refer to themselves as such in their name, engage in activities related to the African Diaspora, or focus on rights and equality issues.

Although I interviewed most of their regular members, all of the organizations chose to be referred to as speaking through a unique voice and way of doing things, in spite of similarities and differences in goals and strategies. Each one’s members are extremely driven, highly dynamic and active, very open and welcoming. The organizations were very candid about problems and obstacles, within the same organizations, between them, with the state, with people, but also about the positive things, and self-critical in a very self-reflective way. There was a great sense of awareness of political and social context, of the urgency of matters, and of available tools.

In spite of obstacles, one of which is a general lack of office space, because resources are obviously scarce, I was always more than welcome, always accommodated in the most comfortable way possible. The goodwill to find the right time and place was ever-present. In this section, we will get to know the organizations in more detail, and we will see both concrete and indirect evidence of a very active and engaged policy formulation arena.

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29 I carried out in-depth interviews and held conversations with between three to five individuals from each organization, both members as well as non-members who were involved in activities such as cultural events, candombe workshops and dance classes, carried out by the organizations (Asociación Misibamba, Movimiento Afro-cultural, Agrupación Xangó, Asociación Civil África y su Diáspora, Asociación Civil ONIRA, Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos “Unión Caboverdeana”, and IARPIDI). The interviews were conducted in both one on one settings and group conversations.
As mentioned, some of the organizations do not have physical office spaces or headquarters, such as Misibamba, whose members congregate at a relative’s house, or Africa y su Diaspora with whom the meeting was in a political cultural center dedicated to former President Néstor Kirchner that provides the organization with operational space. Other organizations, such as Xangó and ONIRA, set the meeting location in offices where members work, such as the Human Rights Secretariat (Ministry of Justice and Human Rights) or the INADI offices, as ONIRA for instance operates out of the Moreno district of Buenos Aires province, in the outskirts of the capital. The interviews held with Movimiento Afro-cultural, Asociación Misibamba, and Unión Caboverdeana were in their respective headquarters. With IARPIDI the meeting was held in a café close to the organization’s offices.

Located near the San Telmo area, Movimiento Afro-cultural disposes of a front and side courtyard, lodgings at the back, an elaborate tool shed stocked with instruments, tools, wood, and other materials used for the artisanal fashioning of drums by hand, and a vegetable patch for growing gourds to be used as instruments, but also tomatoes, lettuce, grapes, a lemon tree. The indoor area, a large warehouse, is divided into several spaces; it has a stage, an open floor used for various dance, capoeira, candombe, and other activities, an atelier for artists, and offices on the side. More than a dozen candombe drums line the far wall, displayed in a row just above pieces of Africa-themed artwork, photography, drawings and related framed texts and verses. A dog and her puppy amble around greeting the constant ebb and flow of people. Greetings are exchanged with hugs, capoeira handshakes, kisses, or a combination of all three. Mate is passed around, including during the conversation with organization members.
For Misibamba, it is considered essential for interviewers and researchers go to the area the organization operates from. The meeting was held where most of its members reside and carry out organizational activities, in the locality of Ciudad Evita, in the La Matanza municipality of Buenos Aires province. The hour long bus ride takes one out of the urban center and into a much more open, rural neighborhood. The houses are humble, closely packed so that one walks through pasillos (corridors), with cumbia, salsa, and reggaeton playing out of cars, houses, and the cellphones of passers-by. The smell of barbecue wafts through the small squares, dogs bark and children chase each other in the spaces between the houses. Teenagers hang out and chat in the sun. Later, Misibamba would explain that much of that area, which used to be open field and forest was occupied land (terrenos tomados) which was subsequently left to the occupiers, who had been evicted from San Telmo and other parts of Buenos Aires, lured away with promises of new housing that in many cases was either unfinished or simply nonexistent. The neighborhood is home to many Afro-Argentine families who live within a walking-distance radius of each other; for lack of an official headquarters, organizational meetings are held at an Aunt’s house who often hosts gatherings where family members and Misibamba members congregate.

As for Unión Caboverdeana, the interview was held in the organization’s facilities in Dock Sud, just south of the city after San Telmo and La Boca, an area of Buenos Aires that is still home to many Cape Verdeans. The front is rented out to operate as a cafeteria – to help with overhead – but a glimpse towards the back shows a large space that is used for multiple purposes, most especially the yearly balls thrown by and for the Cape Verdean community. At the very back, a patio provides space for children to play in, adults to play board games and drink
the traditional Cape Verdean liquor, *grogue*. The grill could fool anyone who thinks it’s only for Argentine asado: here, fish is grilled, the Cape Verdean way. The kitchen housing the grill is decorated with both old and new photographs of members of the community, soccer teams, the famous Cesária Évora, the hero-icon Amílcar Cabral, political leader and nationally recognized liberator of Cape Verde.

All of these spaces hold a richness, the absence of people no longer here and the presence of several generations keeping memories alive, planning, always planning the new ones, nurturing a sense of community.

**Description of the Organizations**

The characteristics and activities of the organizations are similar in some ways and differ in others. What they generally have in common is emphasis on central themes such as community or gathering people (of African descent but not exclusively, as Movimiento Afrocultural for example holds cultural workshops to educate about African culture), working to fight against discrimination, and cultivating African history and heritage. Here we will see their orientations.

Misibamba, according to members the only one of its kind, situates itself as an Afro-Argentine organization whose base and members are “Afroargentinos del tronco colonial” (Afro-Argentines of the ‘colonial trunk’) who are descendants of slaves, and positions itself as a connection between past and future generations, highlighting the continuity of the existence of civil society organization by Afro-Argentines, which began early in the 17th century through the founding of newspapers, civil associations, religious organizations, and mutual aid associations,
among others (Asociación Misibamba, 2011). Misibamba’s objectives presented on its website are to raise awareness in Argentina and abroad about Afro-Argentine culture, promote its development within Afro-Argentine communities, stimulate exchanges between different ethnic groups in Argentina and the world, contribute to education on Afro-Argentine culture through seminars, conferences, workshops, performances, and the media, hold workshops on ethno-education, work with governmental and international institutions to promote exchange and integration programs, especially members of the African diaspora in Argentina and African countries through their representations in Argentina, and fight against racism and intolerance as well as the Afro-Argentines’ falling into oblivion. The organization differentiates itself from other diaspora Afro organizations in Argentina to focus on strengthening the community from the inside and preserve Afro-Argentine cultural heritage.

Members explained that the expression “del tronco colonial” (of the colonial trunk) refers to a tree, because the roots of Afro-Argentines represent Africa, the trunk represents the enslaved Africans brought to Argentina, and their descendants are the branches. Representatives explained that because the enslaved Africans and their descendants were laborers and nannies, worked in homes and fields, and participated in the struggle for Argentina’s independence, Misibamba believes that Argentina has a “historic debt” to this group of people. The main claim of the organization is for historical recognition of the “third root”, Afro-Argentines - the other two roots being of Indigenous and European descent – through education about African culture in Argentine primary and secondary schools where this is not taught, in order to counteract, racism, discrimination, and the “denial” of this part of Argentine history, and gain recognition of Afro-Argentine contributions to the country. The representatives emphasized both the importance of
recognizing Afro-Argentine contributions to the construction of Argentine national identity, and further, the necessity of “changing the national consciousness”, so that people are no longer surprised if a black person says they are Argentine; the aim, they explained, is for this to be a naturally accepted part of reality so that “the average [Argentine] citizen does not think [the black person] is a foreigner.”

Misibamba is made up of several families who are blood relations. Because of miscegenation, the members explained, today many Afro-Argentines “have a little lighter skin than those Africans for example who are arriving now, but it’s not that there are no blacks – (their) skin may be a little lighter, but (they)’re descendants of those slaves.” The organization works with families the members know, “descendants of those who, for one reason or another our grandfathers and grandmothers, perhaps due to a sense of survival, denied their roots,” and networks with other organizations in other provinces, trying to get families to recognize their African roots in an effort to “convince many of (their) peers to investigate and see what (their) roots are (…).” In this sense, an important event that Misibamba organizes is a yearly celebration, for which the entity gathering members of the Afro-Argentine community where they regroup in observance of “something that [members of the community] inherited from their ancestors, respect for the family and family union,” where there is always music and singing of traditional songs.

Movimiento Afrocultural is a different type of organization. Formerly known as *Grupo Cultural Afro*, the organization now bears the name of Movimiento Afrocultural (Afro-cultural Movement) and operates out of a multi-use space situated in the San Nicolás neighborhood of Buenos Aires, just south of the centric Plaza de Mayo and close to San Telmo, a historic black
neighborhood. The aims of this group are to work against all forms of structural and institutionalized discrimination, racism, and xenophobia, and claim basic rights through research, proposals, cultural activities (teaching capoeira, candombe, Afro dance, tango) to both the Afro community and the larger community in general, and the artisanal manufacturing of instruments, some of the materials for which are grown in the organization’s own urban vegetable patch (gourds, etc.). Additionally, Movimiento Afro-cultural works with four other organizations under the auspices of the Permanent Assembly of Afro-Descendant Organizations of Argentina (APOAA) in the formulation of focalized public policies for the Afro community. The four other members of APOAA are Jóvenes Argentinos Caboverdeanos, Agrupación Xangó, Asociación Civil ONIRA, and Amigos de las Islas de Cabo Verde.

An important characteristic of Movimiento Afro-cultural is that it was born out of a conventillo\textsuperscript{30}-type community, and manifests a “quilombo” identity (Movimiento Afro-cultural, 2013) that is intimately related to the space it develops its activities out of, a “space of Afro resistance and empowerment” open to all who wish to participate in its activities. As described on the site and subsequently by the interviewees the organization and its members experienced an eviction first-hand from their previous space of operation, on Herrera street 313, where members lived and worked as in a conventillo.

The cultural center Movimiento Afro-cultural was established in 1987 by young Uruguayans because of a pressing need for Afro-descendants to group together to gather families and friends, and in order to have visibility and claim rights. The organization’s main

\textsuperscript{30}Conventillos were a form of communal living, or boarding houses, where Afro-descendants as well as immigrants to Buenos Aires, Argentina and Montevideo, Uruguay in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries lived upon arrival to Argentina, as tenants and often in cramped conditions, sharing a common cooking area, a courtyard, and washing rooms.
contributions have been to bring many cultural and social issues related to Afro-descendants in Argentina to light, “showing that the culture is alive”, and bringing candombe back to the streets, in spite of a denial “highly fomented by a State which sought to make it invisible.” Movimiento Afro-cultural preserves cultural knowledge in a space for social integration and “brings together all kinds of people: the academic, the politician, the one from the villa (shantytown) or conventillo, the blond, the black, the indigenous,” and it allows people familiarize themselves with Afro history, cultural knowledge and traditions.

The organization “Agrupación Xangó”, the youngest of the interviewed groups as it was founded in 2012, is an organization which groups together activists who advance “respect for human rights, equality, and social justice of Afro-descendants and all communities” and states that it fights against “racism, discrimination, sexism, xenophobia, and homo-lesbo-trans-phobia” with a vision to contribute to the “emancipation of the people of Latin America” and is framed in terms of a “cultural and political” struggle (Agrupación Xangó, 2013). The name chosen for the organization, Xangó, is that of an African god who is considered judge of the Orixas, a decision-maker on good and evil, with predominant virtues being justice and rectitude (Agrupación Xangó, 2013). Another line Agrupación Xangó implements is UNIAFRO together with UNSAM (Universidad Nacional de San Martín) which includes both students and professors where Xangó and UNSAM formulate projects on cultural issues and anti-discrimination; in addition, Xangó also addresses cultural issues, revaluing and promoting Afro culture through percussion workshops, art exhibitions, photography exhibitions, and other initiatives (for the moment, dance is not included but candombe is).
In general, Agrupación Xangó tries to take a complementary posture with respect to other organizations, a non-confrontational position, according to representatives. In the organization’s opinion, coordination with other movements, associations, social groupings is essential, and activists have to be actors in political terms; members gave the example of the feminist movement and those movements that address sexuality issues, through which there is a learning curve, experience coordinating pride marches, participation, and activism for LGBT rights.

The organization “Asociación Civil África y su Diáspora” has been working on African diaspora issues since its inception in 1999, in which year it was launched as part of a the magazine Benkadi, and subsequently received Civil Association status in 2004. The group’s objectives, as presented on its website, is to “elaborate strategies which allow the participation of Afro-descendants and Africans in all aspects of political, economic, social, scientific, and cultural life, as well as in the progress and economic development of Argentina” adding that it seeks to “promote better understanding and respect for [Afro] cultural heritage,” to work towards the “education and integration of a society without discrimination, prejudice, or violence,” and to promote respect for human rights and the fight against Racism, Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance (capitalization in original text).

According to members of Asociación Civil África y su Diáspora, the main objective of the organization, which was created as a foundation, is to convene Afro-descendants, who were born outside of Africa, but also Africans and the general community in order to address black issues first and foremost from a historical perspective, from the slave ships and the slavery system. The organization would like to see more studies done, and not only more social inclusion, but more attention from different areas of society and specifically, access to housing.
education, health, employment, and decent work for everyone. The organization encompasses historical, social, rights-based, and cultural issues in general there are many uprooted people who are yearning for a physical space to meet and carry out activities.

The next organization, Asociación Civil ONIRA, is an NGO based in Moreno, a district in Buenos Aires province belonging to the outskirts of the capital. Its mission is to “promote the principles of equal rights and non-discrimination of Africans, Afro-descendants, immigrants, and refugees, and to ensure respect for and compliance with their fundamental social, economic, cultural, and political rights, without discrimination on the basis of gender, economic situation, language, age, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity and any other social condition or origin” (ONIRA, 2013). The mission, as further explained by ONIRA, stems from the “struggle against the discrimination and racism that Afros suffered because of their color, religion, and traditions,” a struggle in which the group also includes the intermingling between Afros and indigenous groups who “suffer just as much as Africans and Afro-descendants [from] the mutilation of their rights and the loss of their identity” (ONIRA, 2013). ONIRA was formed as an extension of the soup kitchen established by one of the founder’s aunts and uncles and originally functioned as such but has since expanded its activities to those mentioned above. One of the main things ONIRA does, the representative said, is “gather people, bring people together.” She went on to explain that at first it was founded by and for Afros but it has since expanded to include a broader sector of society.

With a different kind of emphasis, the Argentine Institute for Equality, Diversity and Integration (IARPIDI), was founded in 2007 “as a response to the continuous violation of human rights of asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants, Africans, and African descendants in Argentina”
(IARPIDI, 2013). Citing poor adherence to human rights for refugees by the Argentine State and
the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as neglect, lack of access to social
services such as education and health, and outright discrimination, IARPIDI aims to “promote
the social inclusion and professional integration of these people in Argentine society” (IARPIDI,
2013). Among the organization’s aims and mission are contributing to the formulation of sound,
inclusive public policy, promoting equal rights, inclusion, and nondiscrimination, all of which it
does through activities such as research and investigation, workshops and conferences, training
for social and political activists, providing advice and information on legal and administrative
issues, providing assistance in filing legal claims, and ensuring adherence to treaties related to
refugee rights. IARPIDI, rather than focusing on culture, is a human rights institution that
defends human rights in general, and specifically those of African immigrants and refugees as
well as those of other countries. The organization considers cultural rights to be included in
broader human rights.

One of the earliest African immigrant communities in Argentina came from Cape Verde.
The Cape Verdean association, whose official name is Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos “Unión
Caboverdeana” (Cape Verdenian Union Mutual Aid Association) was founded in 1932. As
members explained, Cape Verde was an expeller country for a long time, the liberation fight was
extremely bloody, there were famines (caused by the Portuguese colony); Amílcar Cabral, who
was born in Guinea-Bissau, was at the head of the liberation (much like San Martín in South
America, they illustrated). The first Cape Verdeans began arriving in Argentina around the
1880s, representatives recounted, and there was a flow of immigrants until about the 1950s-60s.
Because they were island people, the newly arrived were good sailors and knew the docks, so
they settled in areas close to the water in La Boca, Dock Sud, Ensenada, Mar del Plata for example. Since the community is large, there are some other Cape Verdean organizations such as Amigos de las Islas del Cabo Verde, Jóvenes Argentinos Caboverdeanos, and La Cabunda de Ensenada close to the city of La Plata.

The Society in Ensenada is the oldest, representatives said, having been founded in 1927. Unión Caboverdeana was formed out of the need to have a common space “to meet with our own” – as the members explained, Africans abroad, like all immigrant communities, characteristically have an associative tendency. In the beginning it functioned as a Mutual Aid or Friendly Society, providing subsidies in 40 installments for occasions like births, weddings, or funerals, but also for cultural activities – people would play cards, cook traditional foods (fish), drink grogue (sugar cane liquor), and for organizing dances. The Friendly Society also has a radio station program launched in June 2013 called “Resistencia Negra”, on Radio Plutón, for which they invite guest speakers (most notably a Cape Verdean legislator, Sidónio Monteiro from the party PAICV founded by Amílcar Cabral) and diffuse African and Cape Verdean music among others. Today, the organization also advocates “for the visibilization and recognition of the contributions of Afro-descendants to the construction of the nation.” It takes a lot of effort to maintain the institution, they said, because everyone has other work, family, or study related obligations, and at the same time there are fewer volunteers.

Besides working with other organizations such as Africa Vive and Casa de la Cultura Indo-Afro-American, Unión Caboverdeana works in concert with Afro-descendent and African organizations, the respondents recounted, highlighting the different African communities (the
Senegalese, Angolan, Guinean, Bissau-Guinean, Congolese) as well as Afro-Brazilian and other Latin American Afro-descendent organizations such as Movimiento Afrocultural.

**Racism and Discrimination**

This theme is present in each organization, as one of the central goals, and something they have in common, is to combat racism. According the president of Agrupación Xangó, in the 1980s, cultural and racism issues were not talked about much, it was all about “equality,” but since then the discourse has changed.

Carrying out cultural activities is still an “arduous task” in Movimiento Afrocultural’s experience, as there is institutionalized racism as well as a continual lack of access to some social sectors such health and education, and “because of discriminatory policies towards black communities in Uruguay, here, and in the rest of Latin America.” What is more, community expression was prohibited and censored for decades.

Nowadays, África y su Diáspora explained, “the very same inequalities exist as before - they have only been translated, modernized.” In other words, “the driver or the chauffeur of before, is the taxi cab driver today; the doorman of yesterday is still the building administrator of today; the stable of boy of yesterday is the janitor, the concierge of today,” the member said.

A representative from ONIRA recounted that she was a pro-democracy political activist in the 1970s and was detained in 1976\(^\text{31}\) for 90 days. Basically, according to the member, the attitude of the authorities at the time was, “What does this black woman want? Didn’t anyone ever tell her that she’s not supposed to speak up?” and her family would tell her, “just be

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\(^{31}\)Argentina experienced a military coup in 1976 which overthrew then President Isabel Perón, leading to a military dictatorship which lasted until 1983.
thankful that you can study and don’t say anything.” It seemed to the interviewee that this tendency to hush things up was “as though [her elders] feared that slavery would come back” and what is more, added that the worry and fear were contagious; at the same time, she pointed out that she herself “was never a slave” so she sees things differently.

In another stark example of discrimination and resulting self-denial of heritage, the representative from ONIRA recounted:

“I used to live in Acasusso when I was young. They kicked us out of there, the neighborhood did not accept the fact that there were blacks there, so we moved to Flores. I was 14 years old. On top of that, my aunts used to say, don’t let the girl hear, don’t let her find out.”

apparently in a way trying to hide reality from her in order to protect her.

Experiences with paternalism surface as well. As IARPIDI explained, because there is interest in these topics and a substantial amount of research is being done, some journalists seem to approach the organization with preconceptions, looking to cover the “misery” behind refugees’ stories and the fact that Argentina is a sort of “savior,” that the refugee is grateful to be in what is perceived as “the promised land,” in a way that imposes preconceived ideas about what being a refugee is. Furthermore, the interviewee described situations where he was met with surprise at his level of education, from what he refers to as a sort of paternalistic view of aid and assistance, based off of an assumption that Afro-descendants are “probably not educated” and therefore need help with the “things they can’t understand.”

To IARPIDI, it is clear that Argentina looks towards Europe, and he believes that Europe’s growth is directly related to its strategy to end up with riches was through imperialistic behavior. In Argentina, “there is a denial of identity, because of blanqueamiento. In other countries, there is community organization (among Afro populations), community identity, a
community which comes together and takes common actions. Argentina didn’t allow for this, it doesn’t exist.”

Increasing research and awareness is positive in Misibamba’s opinion because “more people listen and more people realize that this is a part of the history of Argentina that was not told. It was intentionally denied. A group of intellectuals in 1880 said the Argentines came on ships, but European ships, and that they were white and blue-eyed.” As another member put it, “in Argentina, there was total, purposeful blanqueamiento. A mechanism of self-inclusion in society was to ‘whiten’ oneself, for instance those who had a moto\textsuperscript{32} would tried to comb them their hair in a different way” to pass as whites. Still today, one of the representatives believes, there is an elitist-type discrimination on the basis of class, but it is exacerbated “if you’re black, dark, or mixed” – according to him, this elitist-racial discrimination is cultural.

Many of the organizations mentioned the association of blackness with negative concepts. Member of Unión Caboverdeana explained that in Argentina the word “negro” is used to describe things in a negative sense, like black labor (informal labor) and it is used as slander when wishing to insult someone. However they pointed out, it is very common in Argentine vocabulary so that most people would say it does not literally refer to a “black person” but rather an attitude.

**The importance of education on history and culture**

Most of the organization emphasized the need for raising awareness in general, educating people about the history of Argentina taking into account the connection with Africa, in terms of history, cultural influences, and also nondiscrimination. The representatives of Misibamba

\textsuperscript{32}Lots of curly dark hair, much like an afro hairdo.
highlighted the importance of introducing African and Afro-Argentine history and culture as a subject in primary and secondary school curricula, as currently it is not included in history textbooks or agendas. In many cases this has worked well according, member said, although sometimes school directors are not interested in the topic or do not find it necessary. Further, and importantly, school material needs to be debated among Afro-Argentine actors first and they need to be based on consensus from the community, in Misibamba’s opinion.

For África y su Diáspora, there is a need to “remake and recreate history” in order to include, and show, the contributions of Africans and African descendants in music, gastronomy, and aspects of everyday life because African influence is obvious in Argentine dance, poetry, and music. “We have to reassemble the culture that remains. And there is a lot.” The interviewee mentioned tango, milonga, samba, Cuban son, and in Peru, the “anolfe” and “festejo” genres to point out examples of African influence in other Latin American genres of music.

ONIRA also engages in raising awareness and educating on culture and history. The organization holds training sessions on discrimination and rights, a drum workshop, lectures, and musicology and dance, focusing on typical Afro music but also more broadly such as samba, Argentine folk music, “and even reggaetón.” ONIRA added that organization holds candombe workshops as well, Argentine and Uruguayan, and she pointed out that “[candombe is] from the Rio de la Plata area. It’s all from here. Back then it was all the same [region].” In terms of resources for the organization, Mameto explained that everything is very centralized; “everything happens in the capital - as they say, ‘God is everywhere, but he listens in the capital.’ ”
Once one of the members of ONIRA began working at the INADI, she and her team began to form projects for visibilization. Not to differentiate themselves, she clarified, but to make visible the contributions of Afro-Argentines without differentiating:

“It’s about recognition, about history, about contribution,” the representative said. “And we don’t want to talk about mazamorras and empanadas because that covers up the reality of everything else [that Afro-Argentines contributed]. Yes, they say we were good nannies, the best. Well. That resulted in very well educated little señoritos, right? The education they ended up receiving is important [to take into account].”

In terms of raising awareness and educating, with respect to future projects, one of the things IARPIDI would like to develop is to start an Afro-Argentine magazine, from the Afro perspective, since this is lacking. According to IARPIDI Revista Quilombo, an existing magazine which incorporates African diaspora and Afro-Argentine themes, is not one such magazine as it is not from a fully Afro perspective.

**Identity**

Each organization places an emphasis on identity, both personal and organizational, as this is a central theme in forging community ties and making sense of the ways in which members belong to the African diaspora. The organizations are somewhat divided, however, on subcategories within the greater Afro group, between an all-encompassing, diverse group, and distinguishing specific, often national characteristics, which can lead to conflicts of definition.

As mentioned earlier, Misibamba distinguishes itself for being represented by, and representing, Afro-Argentine families who have been in the country for generations. For

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33Mazamorra: “Moor’s dough” in Spanish, is a maize-based food; Empanada: stuffed bread or pastry that can be either baked or fried. Popularly known, both used to be sold in the streets by Afro-Argentine vendors, largely representing one of the only details remembered in relation to Afro-Argentines, the only feat related to Afro-Argentine history commemorated by schools during the Independence festivities of 25th of May.

34 Masters, gentlemen.
Misibamba, there is a struggle for identity within the community. One of the problems is that “there are no registers of how many [slaves] there were, how many were men, how many women, which tribes they were from… This is lost information. And even they did exist, they must have been burned or destroyed.” On a personal level, one representative wonders what his other name would be had he been born under different circumstances in a different place, and he adopted another, Africanized name for this reason.

Misibamba explained that the Afro-Argentine community’s elders did not often talk about their past experiences in an effort to “reassure themselves and blend with the whites because they felt diminished,” and members highlighted the importance of oral history and talking as much as possible with elders today in order to recover some of that knowledge, as he pointed out there is very little written Afro-Argentine history. The information that is being collected, partly through families who find out about the African heritage and partly through ongoing research, is projected to be exhibited in a space offered to Misibamba by the Historical Museum of La Matanza, which has yet to be renovated. This includes hand-built drums, some recovered candombe song lyrics, typical recipes, and other things handed down through family members.

Similarly, Asociación Civil ONIRA’s foundation itself was a search for identity. It was founded by three sisters and four of their friends in 2003, with a personal dimension: the sisters, not knowing much about their family history and curious about their grandmother’s last name, Murature, began investigating to find out more about their African heritage. The family’s African ancestry was hardly talked about when she was a child, that they were brought as slaves. At most, she said, it was mentioned under hushed voices, it was talked about with fear, and
hidden from others. The grandmother was one of 14 siblings, and her last name was Murature. Now the three sisters know their family history back until approximately 1897-1900.

At ONIRA, finding that not knowing their family history and wondering about identity were not only their experiences, rather they seemed to happen in other families, the representative explained that ONIRA was founded because “there is a problem with complexes” (in other words personal embarrassment about one’s ancestry). Therefore ONIRA carries out activities which address “acceptance of Afro-Argentines, recognition of their place in society, and defending the right to be not only black, but to be both black and Argentine.” One member added that the decision to focus on these issues came from her own experiences in her youth and that of her peers, saying:

“ONIRA’s struggle is so that Afros don’t feel their own difference in society, their external selves but also their internal selves. We work a lot with identity issues, with understanding one’s own blackness in the Argentine context. Our aim is for the kids not to feel that they are less, to teach them Afro values, the beauty that this culture has, the positive things that were brought here, so that their pride can grow, that their Argentine AND black. So that they feel good in their own skin.”

As for general Afro-descendent identity in Argentina, members of Movimiento Afro-cultural pointed out that there are some elements of a kind of “nationalism” within the community whereby distinctions are made on whether someone is Afro-Argentina of colonial roots, or Afro-Uruguayan or other, and she emphasized her vision that “an Afro is an Afro everywhere.” What Afro-descendants have in common is the struggle against institutionalized racism, members explained, and they highlighted the fact that some members of the community have “changed (their) own language,” for instance no longer saying trabajo en negro [black economy, black market, non-declared illegal labor] and other expressions with word “negro” in them.
África y su Diáspora also mentioned that Afro-Argentines (of colonial-era African descent) wanted to “do their own thing” but in the organization’s opinion, “Afro-descendants have always been demanding” and “there is ample space” to accommodate all manner of demands, and added that “we are all related, Afro-Chileans, Afro-Peruvians, Afro-Bolivians and so on.”

At Unión Caboverdeana, strong ties are kept with Cape Verde. As the members explained, Cape Verdeans were always closed off to other Africans, some consider themselves Portuguese but mostly they are “neither European, nor African, but Cape Verdean.” It is a very mixed society, representatives explained; the country is made up of many islands and they used be a strategic point for the slave trade. The Portuguese used to exploit people by offering scholarships to young kids to be educated in Portugal, and then they would “brainwash them and send them off to other Portuguese colonies in Africa to [carry out acts of colonial oppression].” Skin color is a form of classification, there’s everything from really dark to really light because of the mixing. However the members pointed out, “as Amílcar said, we’re still African.”

**View of the Government and Politics**

Generally the organizations identify positive changes in the stance of the government on issues related to Afro-Argentines and Afro-descendants, which manifests as the state being open and receptive.

From the perspective of one of Movimiento Afro-cultural’s members, officials are responsible for the wrongs against Afro-descendants, before and in the present, “because of their indifference,” but they have come to understand that racism is “just a pretext to control the
masses” and that it’s “socio-cultural; the result of resentment, anger and frustration.” However, Afro culture “can bring about favorable changes” because “it provides society with tools for us to reframe our position as human beings,” and members highlighted the principles of environmental protection in African culture. Through through A.P.O.A.A., Movimiento Afro cultural fights alongside other organizations to reach State legitimation, “to have Afros be recognized as part of the construction of the State.” At the same time, members pointed out that the organization is not necessarily politically aligned, although she indicated there were often politicized debates within the group and among A.P.O.A.A. members on how to approach policy-making and how the members view the state.

Misibamba also pointed out that nowadays the country is open to Afro issues, and many organizations are working actively in this field;

“For example, when the subject was spoken of before, 80% of the public was not interested. Now some officials, due to there being an opening across the continent to discuss the issue of minorities, whether it’s indigenous peoples, people of humble backgrounds, or Afros, all the people who are discriminated against, they're listening. I do not know if it's because of politics or because they are really interested - but the fact is that the doors are opening. And we try to take advantage of that, us and other African organizations, so that our issues can gain visibility.”

Members of Xangó sympathize with different political parties and are Afro-descendants and/or activists from the social field who are not necessarily Afro, who aim to work on equality issues, against racism, for social inclusion, cultural issues, and gender issues. There is a clear social organization, focusing on organizational district policies. The representative added that there is “a kind of fantasy that Xangó is financially very well off” because of the activities that it carries out, but this is not true, he said; it’s still run very much from [members’] own pockets at the moment. The way Xangó functions is through each members’ participation who work with workers’ unions such as UTE, SUTEBA, CTA.
For Agrupación Xangó it is important that the state exercises focalized public policies which break with history and which establish basic levels of equality. Some members of the organization a politicized view of mobilization with respect to rights, and in some of their opinion it is more effective to have an organized, collective movement, rather than many independent movements.

At the moment, according to Agrupación Xangó the State is observing Afro organizations and taking into account its international rights obligations, because there is pressure from these groups to become more visible. For this to come about, the 2010 census was instrumental, members said. In 2010 the president of the organization was a coordinator within the Commission of Afro-descendants on the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs Advisory Board, which was conducive to the inclusion of the question in the census and as a result, today, the Ministry talks about these issues; the census results will have an impact on other public policies, as it allows for visibility. The present political juncture is fundamental for advancing these issues, members said, and added that “the Afro movement was able to position itself in these countries [which have a similar political juncture as Argentina]. It has to do with national identity, with Latin American integration.” Even though there is a lot of fragmentation between groups, and even though there is a racist discourse which is advantageous to the rightists of today, Carlos argued, civil society’s influence contributed to different issues being addressed and brought to light.

In a similar way, as África y su Diáspora sees it, there has been a turning point in the Argentine state which allows for minority rights and affirmative action issues to be addressed. The representative gave the example of the question included in the 2010 census, which permits
the exposure and visibility of the problems experienced by the Afro community. Until recently, the state “didn’t look at what happened during the colonial process and the western domination of the Americas, the black labor which was used,” the member explained, and added that “the state is now beginning to redesigning itself.”

Also similarly to Movimiento Afrocultural, África y su Diáspora addressed the larger context of social change experienced by Latin America. In the interviewee’s opinion, Venezuela’s President Hugo Chávez represented a break with previous political trends, a significant change; Chávez set a new kind of perspective, a different state, a much more inclusive one. Other similar progressive governments mentioned were those of Correa, Lula, and Néstor Kirchner (Ecuador, Brazil, and Argentina respectively) as well as Evo Morales in Bolivia, which according to the member began to effect substantial changes. Progressive governments, Andrés explained, address issues such as women’s rights, and sexuality and sexual identity, and consider these issues important. África y su Diáspora’s representative expressed his belief that eventually there will be public policy for Afro-descendants in Argentina, but pointed out that ‘it depends on us. We have to propose them ourselves” and mentioned the example of school textbooks which include the “other” story. “There needs to be a call [for discussions], political work. You have to create awareness. This government was the one who first spoke about these needs.”

In IARPIDI’s opinion however, on the issue of affirmative action, “there’s a lot of talk, but little action.” According to the organization,
“There are some laws, but they’re not implemented; policies won’t be achieved in the short run. What is happening with the Qom 35? Nobody is doing anything. And they are actually organized! Afro-descendants, not so much. It’s doubtful that they would achieve policies anytime soon, we shouldn’t trick ourselves. If the Afro community could organize itself, and the Africans would join in, the situation would become even more complicated because there are such a variety of claims. The truth is that segregation, as there was in the United States of America for example, permitted them to get organized, intellectuals used to get together, there was preaching and campaigning in churches. In Argentina, everyone is isolated. Therefore, it’s very far from happening.”

On the other hand, in terms of recent developments and the role of the state, in ONIRA’s opinion there have certainly been changes. There’s a change in mentality, and nowadays there is a new phase of increasing public awareness regarding Afro-Argentine issues. There’s a state which “accompanies” and has a different outlook.

According to the Unión Caboverdeana’s activists, the fight for recognition and rights is a historic one and has been going on “for over 30 years”, but that now in the last decade, “there is a certain opening from the part of the state which was practically nonexistent before.” After the reinstatement of democracy in 1983 there was a “renaissance” of minority groups in Argentina, which become more diversified in the 1990s, and efforts concentrated on recognition and existence. From about 2003 onwards, the respondents explained, there is more dialogue and they are invited to actually participate in state-led efforts of antidiscrimination and policy dialogues. Even so, there is “a percentage who pretend like it interests them” but that in the end, the outcomes “are purely symbolic”. The respondents explained that sometimes projects are presented yet stall before implementation due to excuses such as a “lack of funding.” Nevertheless, the respondents see it as positive that there is a presence of minorities, of Afro-descendants, within the State; in their opinion, while the “Day of the Afro-Argentine” is symbolic, it still has importance. Ideally, they said, Afro-descendant issues should be taken into

35 Also known as Toba, an indigenous group native to northern Argentina, parts of Bolivia and Paraguay (Toba, 2014).
account at all times instead of only on one day, but at the same time, they can “take advantage of
that umbrella,” the umbrella being state openness. The important thing, they stressed, is that it
“doesn’t stop there” and simply stay in the symbolic phase. Before, the respondents recounted, to
speak about racism was “taboo” – it would elicit great surprise if anyone mentioned personal
accounts of suffering racist or discriminatory acts.

They noted that, while there clearly is an openness from the part of the state, “the
problems begin” when it comes to concrete measures thus inspiring skepticism about future
conge concrete measures. Public policy, the representatives said, is “always problematic” because
“there are always conflicts in politics, but this is not only negative, only when there are
conflicting interests,” adding that “it’s a question of political will from both government officials
and ourselves.” The members stressed that it was essential to be “flexible and strategic” when it
comes to defining positions, interests.

Policy: Successes and Shortcomings

As for policy formulation and activities, Misibamba pointed to the need to raise
awareness among members of the Afro-Argentine community and to participate actively in
strategic places and cultural events (museums, art exhibitions). A setback the members identified
is that “some of the issues (Afro-Argentines) want to see discussed, are not being discussed” and
that Misibamba is sometimes invited as guests instead of organizers to some decisive or
commemorative events. However, two successful events where Misibamba was present were the
200th anniversary celebration of the 1813 Assembly in Plaza de Mayo (celebrated on January
31st, 2013) and the inauguration of the plaque in the Paseo de las Tres Culturas park in Santa Fe
city, along with Casa de la Cultura Indo-Afro-Americana, an NGO from Santa Fe province
which addresses Afro and indigenous issues, a plaque which recognized the “third root” of Argentine culture: the Afro-Argentines.

One instance of success Movimiento Afrocultural highlighted was winning a competition organized by CRESPIAL (Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage of Latin America), an organization created under the auspices of UNESCO in 2006, for the recognition of candombe as a cultural community practice and cultural heritage. However, the organization was pessimistic about public policies for Afro-Argentines being truly implemented. “There is no public policy for us. I see that as being very difficult! It’s a state that thinks we’re all the same, that everything is ‘for everyone’. But if the state can’t acknowledge indigenous groups for example (they don’t acknowledge them, but they beat them up), then what are we talking about?” one of the representatives said.

On the other hand, Agrupación Xangó cites two important successes in the advance for non-discrimination, the first being the Preconference of the Americas against Racism in Santiago, Chile in 2000, and the second being the third World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa in 2001. While the organization cites challenges such as the continued existence of racist capitalism, ethno-racial domination, institutionalized racism, economic oppression, and outright racist acts (slurs, insults, etc.) of Afro-descendants and Africans in its description of the situation, Agrupación Xangó nevertheless highlights the recent regional and national political “transformations”, specifically that of progressive governments and their search for a more inclusive, participative, and integrating country model in the Mercosur region and specifically in Argentina, referring clearly to the current government constellation. Beyond that, Agrupación
Xangó recognizes and calls for the need for specific policies which benefit the community it identifies, and sees the struggle against racism as both a cultural and political one.

Referring to the 2010 census, ONIRA lamented the fact that the expanded version was not carried out properly, and pointed out that census day coincided with the day Néstor Kirchner\textsuperscript{36} passed away and so “people didn’t much feel like doing the census.” The interviewee was not asked the question about African ancestry, for instance.

As for public policy, ONIRA believes they can be formulated but that awareness has to be raised first, and the issues made visible; the second step is to gain more spaces and work on cultural issues. One example of success ONIRA gave was the designation of the 8\textsuperscript{th} of November as \textit{Día del Afrodescendiente} in which civil society organizations had an important role. In terms of the types of policies needed, ONIRA specified the fields of gender issues, education, children and teenagers, housing, and very importantly, the aging and health. Schools need to work on curbing violent language and discrimination amongst the children.

As for recent changes, IARPIDI’s representative was skeptical about improvements in adherence to human rights except for the new immigration law which benefitted Senegalese immigrants; in his opinion there is still a long way to go to reach decent work, freedom to circulate freely, decent housing, and to implement measures against discrimination. In terms of employment, in IARPIDI’s opinion, Argentina still works through slavery; unskilled labor is delegated to indigenous people, Afro-descendants, immigrants from neighboring countries such as for instance the Bolivians. But, IARPIDI sees progress in the growing amount of research as a positive development. In IARPIDI’s opinion it is necessary to a) recognize the racism of the

\textsuperscript{36}Former President of Argentina, the current President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner’s late husband. Néstor Kirchner died of a heart attack on October 27\textsuperscript{th}, 2010.
authorities (institutionalized racism), b) raise awareness on these issues, and have authorities raise awareness as well, and c), reform human rights organizations through genuine changes by removing this paternalistic view that black people have to be “saved.”

Similarly to Movimiento Afrocultural, one big step for IARPIDI was the 2001 Conference in Durban, where “countries assumed their responsibility for the fight against racism.” As a result of that conference, Argentina created the Plan Nacional contra la Discriminación (National Plan against Discrimination) in 2005 but in practical terms, he argued, very little has been done. From the representative’s point of view, the census in 2010 was technically not a census; in fact, “Congress should pass a proper census template, as a law, for the next census in 2020.”

Alluding to discord and obstacles among the Afro-descendent community, the members of Unión Caboverdeana judged that the reason why advances are slow in materializing is “purely the responsibility of the Afro movement” because in fact, all of its components have “more or less the same objectives,” and they also criticized the lack of political discussions and political proposals both within and among the organizations and their leaders, stressing that it was impossible for an association to be apolitical because their existence is “necessarily a political statement” of representation. “Everyone thinks they have the truth, but we all contribute – and also subtract, because where some advance, others undermine. It’s a question of ethics rather than ideology,” the members said.

The representatives at Unión Caboverdeana framed Afro-descendant movements in two terms; the “Malcolm X-type” civil rights struggle, and using the example of what Rastafarians stand for, the “back to Africa” kind of movement which focuses on repatriation and
rediscovering African roots. Here in Argentina, they explained, there is little consensus, little definition on which of the two types best describes the movement, or even what would best describe the movement. At one point recently, members recalled, the terms “Afro-right” and “Afro-left” surfaced as an attempt to describe the political spectrum present within the movement (“Afro-right” referring to the more conservative and traditional “old school” portions of the community and “Afro-left” referring to a progressive approach that includes a myriad of other rights issues), however they were skeptical that this was an appropriate way to explain the different streams and warned that it was “divisive.”

Member of Unión Caboverdeana expressed support for the designation of the national “Afro-Argentine and Afro Culture Day” even though they suggested it would have been better if the day were “Afro-descendant Day” because it would be more inclusive. Aside from these differences, however, they stressed that what was important was that the law was passed, and cited that fact as a step forward.

Another example of an obstacle Unión Caboverdeana representatives mentioned is that organizations wanted to do a procession to Plaza de Mayo for this occasion, on Friday November 8th, 2013, but since the Pride March was taking place the next day, the Human Rights Secretariat (within the Ministry of Justice) did not concede permission with the excuse that “there would be no space due to preparations for the Pride March.”

**Approach to Legislation and Rights**

Through Movimiento Afrocultural, concrete objectives have been reached successfully with respect to the state because it has brought together candombe experts, and filed various
complaints against racism and the abuse of manifestations of Afro culture, among others. Movimiento Afrocultural calls on international treaties, such as Durban 2001, and the CEDAW [Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women], on which the organization bases its claims to fight against collective racism, to demand respect for rights in general and specifically the right to live decently. Even though Movimiento Afrocultural acknowledged difficulties even when appealing to laws and treaties, she admitted that it’s better to have laws than none at all, and in her opinion, sometimes “the State genuinely doesn’t know about a lot of things. It has the intention [to remedy things], but it doesn’t know” about them or does not know how to. Not only that, but it is one thing to have a law and quite another to enforce it or have it be respected – and it’s the same with policies, she said, the creation of which she was skeptical about: “You’ve got the law, and then you have reality, like for instance gay marriage. There’s the law now, but nobody is stopping the insults.” In Movimiento Afrocultural’s opinion, first and foremost “the cement of the base in policies has to be cultural.”

IARPIDI demonstrates the violation of the human rights of some Africans and Afro-descendants from other parts of Latin America (most, like for instance Afro-Colombian university students who make most of this group) on the basis of research and investigations. The organization also participates in conferences, of the State or other human rights organizations in Argentina and actively supervises residence issues, of Senegalese and Dominican immigrants, and works with prosecutors’ offices and advocacy groups to defend refugees.

Unión Caboverdeana considered that while it is important and positive that the state should open its doors, the representatives also cautioned that this phenomenon needs to be watched with a critical eye without discrediting advances; they pointed to gaps in the
implementation of laws, which in their opinion are “first class” in Argentina, pointing to a solid legal basis in human rights law and specifically mentioning the constitutional rank of human rights treaties in the 1994 reform.

**Gender Issues**

While not all organizations focus on gender issues, it was nonetheless a salient theme especially when women or gay activists were interviewed. For example, besides working against racism, Agrupación Xangó focuses on sexual diversity and gender mainstreaming; according to the organization, the Afro community also has some component of homophobia. Xangó is a very varied organization, all positions and political leanings are included in its members – “it’s good to have different proposals and for everyone to articulate from different points of view” members said. The association works through education: coordination from the base, starting first in schools, in educator centers (centers belonging to teachers’ unions) especially in teaching material and workshops, cultural issues, and anti-discrimination policies. In this last point we coordinate with other organizations, in promoting actions for anti-discrimination policies.

Movimiento Afro cultural also raised the issues of gender relations, particularly of sexism (machismo) in society but specifically within the organizations as well; one of the members highlighted it was constant work to demand and win respect in leadership roles, and – throwing in some comic relief – especially for those who are “lesbian, feminist, and black.”

Machismo was also raised as an issue by member of Unión Caboverdeana. Some members of the community, they explained, were very sexist before, but that has changed now. Everything used to have to be run by men. However, since immigration fell from the 1960s
onwards, it was necessary for this to change; it was hard for them to accept it but now there is a new generation of activists in the last few years.

**Additional Organizations**

It is important to note some Afro-Argentine organizations that were unfortunately not included in this research due to scheduling and availability but nevertheless have contributed, and continue to contribute, essential activism and voice to the field.

One of these organizations is África Vive, one of the earliest and most active organizations, which unfortunately was not available for contact at the time of this investigation. One of its most important outputs was the organization of the first pilot census of Afro-Argentines in 2000 mentioned earlier. Even though in its day África Vive may not have convened and implemented many social policy projects, it was instrumental because it was able to call the attention of government officials and the media, it raised the idea that Afro-Argentines could fight for their rights, and it called the attention of academics who drew some focus back to studies on Afro-Argentines (Frigerio & Lamborghini, 2011b, p. 29).

Another very active group in the Cape Verdean community is La Cabunda of Ensenada, whose efforts resulted in the African-Argentine Culture Day to be established in La Plata. A third organizations with whom interviews could not be organized due to distance, which is not only active but cultivates ties with various other Afro-Argentine organizations such as Misibamba but also with indigenous and other civil society organizations, is *Casa de la Cultura Indo-Afro-Americana*, headed by Lucía Dominga Molina in Santa Fe province. The organization was founded in 1988 and achieved legal personality in 2006 (Maffia & Zubrzycki, 2012) and its main
objectives are to fight against racism and discrimination, and in favor of raising awareness and the right to difference (Maffia & Zubrzycki, 2012, p. 39).

2.2. Affirmative Advances

A Policy Blueprint: APOAA’s Youth Conference and Assembly

The growing capacity of the organizations is perhaps best depicted by two conferences organized by the APOAA (Permanent Assembly of Afro-Descendant Organizations of Argentina) that were both pivotal in the process of affirmative action policy formulation in Argentina. First the Encuentro de Jóvenes in September 2011, and second, the March 2012 National Assembly of Afro-descendants in Argentina (Asamblea Nacional de Afrodescendientes de la Argentina) at which many who attended the youth conference were present as well.

As Movimiento Afrocultural explained, the first youth gathering as a whole was in September 2011, [the Youth Gathering], using funds provided by the State (through the Ministry of Education under former Minister Alberto Sileoni). The state also provided lodgings in the Garrigós Institute for those who came from other provinces; young people came from Corrientes, Córdoba, Santiago del Estero, Catamarca, Tucumán, Chaco, Entre Ríos, Santa Fe, Buenos Aires province, and Buenos Aires capital. They spoke about many things the organizations in Buenos Aires “wouldn’t ordinarily find out about” – for example the ones from Córdoba spoke about the Ley del Merodeo (Loitering Act), which police used as justification to arrest people in the street because they were black, they said.

The Youth Meeting took place between the 9th and 11th of September, 2011 and was held at the Ministry of Education, established a youth group of Afro-descendants, and was an opportunity for attendees to address issues of Afro-descendant identity as well as the different
realities across the country (Encuentro de Jóvenes, 2011). Officials present at the inauguration included the Minister of Education, Alberto Sileoni; the Advisor to the Chief of Staff Jaime Perczyk, and the Secretary of Promotion of Social Policy, Pablo Urquiza.

The specific objectives of the youth gathering were the following:

- “Promoting opportunities for dialogue, participation, training, discussion, thought and knowledge production and of African descended youth;
- Creation, implementation and monitoring of affirmative action and guidelines for the formulation of public policies from a generational perspective for Afro-descendants, mainly to combat racism, sexism, homo-lesbo-transphobia, poverty, xenophobia, religious intolerance and all forms of oppression focused on the African and Afro-descendant community;
- Creating and promoting opportunities for education, training, representation, exchange and political participation for our youth, revealing talent as well as individual and collective capacities to strengthen our communities;
- Definition of a political agenda within the movement of African descent that incorporate our claims as young Afro-descendants, strengthening intergenerational spaces and promoting spaces of political articulation with other social movements: Indigenous peoples, women, youth, LGBT, rural, and political and union-based.”
  (Encuentro Nacional, 2011)

In the declaration elaborated during the conference, participants proposed to continue efforts to make visible the realities of the Afro-descendant community in Argentina, as well as strengthen the capacity to organize in the fight against racism and poverty in order to deepen democracy and social, cultural and political inclusion. For this purpose, the gathering created the Young Afro-descendant Network of Argentina (Red de Jóvenes Afrodescendientes de la Argentina) (Encuentro de Jóvenes, 2011).

The proposals of this group ranged from strengthening antidiscrimination measures with a gender aspect (combating sexism and encouraging respect for Afro-descendant women); reforming the education system by including “ethnoeducational” material, and improving capacity building of Afro-descendant teachers and educators; fomenting cultural activities such
as regional exchanges, recording and documenting oral histories and collective knowledge; providing career training and improving youth employment, track unemployment statistics of Afro-descended youth, and support small and large scale entrepreneurship of this group; improve access to the health system and sexual education programs; redress systematic forced evictions of Afro-descendants, and support the creation of housing cooperatives; and lastly, raise awareness about the history and culture of African descendants in Argentina through the media, and promote Afro-descendants in the media through technical training and capacity building.

At the March 2012 conference, over 300 members of the community were present from various points of the country, from the same regions as the September 2011 gathering, however this time Afro-Argentines also came from the provinces of Misiones and La Rioja.\textsuperscript{37} One of the tangible products of this second conference was the elaboration of a report and action plan titled “Towards the implementation of public policies for Afro-descendants” to be submitted to Alicia Kirchner, the Minister of Social Development (Asamblea, 2012a).\textsuperscript{38} Organized by the six APOAA member organizations, Movimiento Afrocultural, Asociación Amigos de las Islas del Cabo Verde, Agrupación Xangó, Asociación Civil ONIRA, and Jóvenes Argentinos Caboverdeanos, and with support from the INADI, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Secretariat of Human Rights, and the Ministry of Social Development, the meeting called together Afro-Argentine community activists to discuss concrete steps for designing and implementing policies in Argentina that would take this population into account. The action plan, generated and agreed upon by a wide portion of the Afro-descendant community in Argentina, is

\textsuperscript{37} Members of Movimiento Afrocultural explained that the results of the first Assembly held in March 2012 were included in the 2012 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) that the United Nations Human Rights Council reports each year. The UPR is “a new and unique mechanism of the United Nations which started in April 2008 and consists of the review of the human rights practices of all States in the world, once every four years and a half” (UPR, 2014).
most likely the most tangible and practical collection of policy proposals and thus serves as a blueprint for future policy formulation.

The first Assembly gathering was in March 2012, where the Action Plan was established. In Movimiento Afro cultural’s opinion, a more concrete demand can be made by working as a whole, as a collective, with people in other areas of the country as well. At the Assembly gathering, people from La Rioja and Misiones were also present, states which had not been represented at the Youth Gathering.

Both the gathering and the assembly “revealed how everyone thinks,” as one of Movimiento Afro cultural’s member recounted, and showed the different experiences and points of view depending on the region or area each member was from. A salient characteristic was that not all of those who took part in the meetings see themselves as black; while they acknowledge their African roots, they preferred to identify themselves as belonging to indigenous groups, Movimiento Afro cultural explained, because

“Blacks were so stigmatized, viewed so negatively, especially in the provinces, that they tend to see themselves more as indigenous, visually speaking. It’s important to acknowledge the mestizaje that there was. All this reflects how much blanqueamiento there was, the discourse of the “white country” set up by Europeans. Tango, for instance, is clearly Afro. It was appropriated [by Argentina] but its roots are denied. There is a phrase from a song by Alfredo Zitarrosa, it goes like this: “...The milonga is candombe’s daughter, much like the tango is the milonga’s son...”

The goals of the National Assembly of Afro-descendants in Argentina were to contribute to “visibilization and social transformation, deeper equality and equity,” and devise mechanisms to strengthen “non-discrimination and the fight against racism” by creating spaces for meetings and opportunities for dialogue in order to formulate and implement public policies for Afro-descendants (Asamblea, 2012a).

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39 In Spanish: “La milonga es hija del candombe, así como el tango es hijo de la milonga.”; a well known phrase by Alfredo Zitarrosa (popular Uruguayan singer and composer).
The meeting was opened by Eduardo Luis Duhalde (Secretary of Human Rights), Marita Perceval (Undersecretary of Human Rights), and Pedro Mouratian (Controller from the INADI). Pedro Mouratian emphasized that “the agenda that the State takes [should] be related to the genuine claims of organizations and society itself, there is no better policy than that which emerges from the bases” (Asamblea, 2012a). The closing ceremony was hosted by the Minister of Social Development, Alicia Kirchner, who received the organizations’ proposals and emphasized the value of the conference for the exercise of rights (Asamblea, 2012a).

Other officials present were Ambassador Oscar Laborde (General Coordinator of the Advisory Council of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Argentina) and members of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development, and INDEC (the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses of Argentina) (Asamblea, 2012a).

Pedro Mouratian said in his opening speech, “There are real needs that have been invisibilized, communities that have been invisibilized. In INADI we had complaints of people who, while doing immigration paperwork, were told they were not Argentinians because they did not have the image upon which the Argentine-ness was built. Therefore it is important to ratify the conviction and sense of belonging of Afro-descendants to be Argentine. Now there is a new reality that the Argentine State is more present than ever and is taking responsibility for past mistakes by trying to think in any inclusive way in the present and the future. The agenda of the state has to do with the genuine claims of these organizations and of society itself, because there is no better policy than that which arises from the bases” (Prensa INADI, 2012. Own translation).

On his part, Ambassador Oscar Laborde expressed that “Our nation has three components: the indigenous people, also invisibilized, persecuted, and ignored; European
immigration and immigration from neighboring countries; and Afro-descendants, to whom we have to apologize for not recognizing their contribution to the establishment of Argentina” (Prensa INADI, 2012).

As members of the conference, there were delegations from Corrientes, Santiago del Estero, Entre Ríos, Catamarca, La Rioja, Tucumán, Buenos Aires province (Merlo, Moreno, Mar de Ayó, Berisso, Ensenada, La Plata, Tigre), Buenos Aires city, and also from Uruguay. The first day, March 15th, was held at Movimiento Afrocultural, where participants formed committees and sat together to brainstorm policy proposals in small groups. The next day, the committees reunited once more to continue their discussions, but this time the meetings were held in the Museo Histórico Nacional. On the last day, each committee presented their conclusions to each other and submitted them to the organizers.

Quoting the conference in Durban (The third International Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance), this text highlights the declaration produced at the Durban conference and its call for the collection of statistical data on Afro-descendant populations, to evaluate and design policies of redress for this population, the debts incurred through the institution of slavery, and to take actions to combat racism, poverty, and discrimination directed at these communities (Primer Informe, 2012).

The report collects and presents the proposals resulting from discussions carried out in different thematic committees at the assembly which are centered on the following topics: human rights and social development, education and Afro culture, gender, youth, health, aging persons, communication, housing and environment, and work and development (Primer Informe, 2012).
The Committee of Human Rights and Social Development proposes a series of measures in the final document. First, it calls for creating a permanent working group of Afro-descendant organizations in the National Human Rights Secretariat and the Ministry of Social Development in order to strengthen policy formulation and liaisons between the organizations and governmental bodies, specifically between the Ministries of Education, Health, Labor, Interior, Foreign Relations, and Defense; the Secretariat of Culture; and provincial governments, and representatives of different African Consulates and Embassies as well as of immigrant Afro-descendant communities, among others. The objective here would be to “foment the institutionalization of public policies and affirmative action” for the Afro-descendant community, in the short, medium and long term, with an emphasis on antidiscrimination, public awareness, and social inclusion. The role of the organizations in this working group would be to create spaces for dialogue on the local, provincial and national levels. Apart from the working groups, this Committee also called for the establishment of a group of Afro-descendant “promoters” to monitor the aforementioned activities as well as provide input to facilitate an “affirmative historical perspective” in the history of the nation (Primer Informe, 2012). One important point made here is the need for capacity building on the functions of the Argentine political system and prioritizing charges and claims of police harassment and repression, with special attention to the unresolved case of José Delfín Acosta Martínez, who was “arrested, tortured and assassinated by federal police agents in April 1996.” The Committee adds that it proposes marching for this cause every 24th of March (Día Nacional por la Memoria, la Verdad y la Justicia)\textsuperscript{40} as Afro-descendants also have “historically [been] victims of state terrorism” (Primer Informe, 2012).

\textsuperscript{40}Día de la Memoria por la Verdad y la Justicia, or the Day of Remembrance for Truth and Justice, was established
The Committee on Education and Afro Culture supports a cultural and social educational program on African descendant related issues in educational institutions through the following two measures. First, the committee proposes an amendment to the National Education Law 26.206 which would mandate as obligatory the inclusion of African history, cultural contributions, and contemporary issues in primary and secondary school curricula, the training of faculty to teach these subjects, the elaboration of handbooks and teaching material, and fostering cultural and educational exchanges with African Union countries, all of which should be consulted with members of this committee. Second, the committee calls for the recovery and rehabilitation of physical spaces of cultural production relevant to Afro-descendent identity in Argentina and fomenting artistic and cultural manifestations, such as placing commemorative plaques in key locations and real estate, exhibiting art by Afro-descendants in public spaces, and including Afro artists in the government’s cultural agenda (Primer Informe, 2012).

In the Gender Committee, discussion centered on the objective to strengthen and improve the participation of Afro-descendant women in all aspects of society, lending women prominence, and generating higher self-esteem and a full enjoyment of rights. The main objective of this Committee is to promote the education, training, and capacity building of Afro-descendant women in order to increase their empowerment in decision making in their private, professional, and social lives. The points proposed include lending visibility and awareness to the contributions of women to society, taking measures to combat sexism, stereotypes and the objectification of black women’s bodies, and enforcing the National Sexual Education Law in

to commemorate the victims of Argentina’s Dirty War, a “systematic plan of illegal repression which caused the disappearance of 30,000 people”, held every March 24th, the day of the coup d’état of 1976 by the military forces in Argentina. (Fechas Patrias, 2011).
schools (especially in Santiago del Estero), all of which is to be carried out with the direction and participation of Afro-descendant professionals (Primer Informe, 2012).

The Youth Committee, by far the most numerous (Movimiento Afrocultural, 2013), presented six goals. The first is to continue to strengthen and amplify the National Network of Young Afro-descendants (created in September 2011 at the youth conference) by organizing regional conferences and institutional spaces, as well as give lectures and seminars at schools. The second recommendation is to carry out information and awareness campaigns to change stereotypes of black women and men; thirdly, the committee calls for the development and implementation of antiracism workshops geared towards public officials, the police force, and schools; fourth, fomenting sexual education and health workshops in schools; fifth, capacity building and sensitization of public officials with respect to African immigrants and their documentation; and sixth, the committee proposes the creation of an agency or commission to revise textbook content to include African history and culture.

Within the Committee on Health, the group raised the importance of everyone’s right to know “who one is” genetically as well, and the need for special consideration for the genetic particularities of Afro-descendants who, according to the members, have a predisposition to certain diseases such as sickle cell anemia among others, and also the inheritance of the physical consequences of the psychological resistance of black women (cysts, fibroids). The committee calls for budgets destined to civil society advisory mechanisms, as well as interdisciplinary groups incorporating ethno-racial perspectives, for the Afro-descendant population; the need for official investigation into discrimination in the health system; the allocation of funding for research on ethnically-based diseases, their treatment, and subsequent publication of this
information; foment the incorporation of best practices gleaned from these types of affirmative action policies in MERCOSUR and UNASUR member countries; and lastly, take into special account the propensity of Afro-descendants to develop diabetes, glaucoma, and respiratory problems, among others (Primer Informe, 2012).

In the Committee of the Aging, similar proposals were made as in the Committee of health with respect to consideration of health issues specific to the Afro-descendant population. In addition, the group recommended to improve access to medical attention and health services for the aged, a pension amnesty for those stay-at-home caretakers and temporary workers who have the required number of years to retire as well as a moratorium to activate retirement, to facilitate the retirement of immigrants (appealing to Article 4 of Ley 25.871 which disposes the human rights of immigrants), and finally, the allocation of funding and establishment of recreational centers for the aged which respond to the traditional values of Afro-descendants (Primer Informe, 2012).

As for the Committee on Communications, members called for the need to incorporate media outlets (in radio, television, cinema, and the press) of Afro-descendant associations under the Law of Audiovisual Media, improving access to state-owned frequencies on the national, provincial, and municipal levels (as part of the mandated 33% of frequencies that are reserved for civil society organizations), and permanent training and capacity building of members of the Afro-descendant community in media-related issues (Primer Informe, 2012).

The rest of the document pertains to housing, territorial and environmental issues, and labor. The Committee on Housing, Territory, and Environment focused on territorial disputes in

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41 Known in Argentina as the “Ley de Medios,” officially known as Ley de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual, Ley 26.522, passed in October 2009 (Ley de Medios, 2011).
specific provinces (Santiago del Estero, Corrientes, Tucumán, Córdoba, and Catamarca) where according to the members, many Afro-descendants have inherited land for which they do not have title deeds or paperwork, which leaves them vulnerable to expropriation by corporations and the local government. In this sense, the committee calls on the state to facilitate the legal recognition of ownership of these lands as well as the emission of title deeds for both Afro-descendants and indigenous people (Primer Informe, 2012).

Similarly, the Housing Committee also stressed the importance of the regulation and issuing of title deeds for properties, to strengthen property rights and reduce the vulnerabilities caused by the absence of these documents. In addition, the members emphasized the need for dignified housing with essential services such as water, safety, economically accessible housing, and a safe environment. The members proposed four policy actions: first, state financial and technical assistance for the development of adequate housing; second, the inclusion of civil society organizations and cooperatives throughout all phases of planning and building activities; third, state commitment to activate existing but inactive cooperatives; and fourth, to facilitate paperwork related to consolidating property rights, succession, and debt relief (Primer Informe, 2012).

The Committee on the Environment raises the question of mining and pesticides, and the consequential harms to communities in affected areas. The members proposed the improvement and development of preliminary studies recounting all possible harms resulting from mining and the use of insecticides, so that communities can make informed decisions as well as obligate mining and agricultural companies to take responsibility, reduce harms, and provide compensation for ill consequences. Most importantly, the Committee suggests prohibitions on
expropriation of land, as well as the use of exclusively local labor as according to the group, local economic development is the only positive aspect of mining and therefore the only source of benefit for the community from these activities (Primer Informe, 2012).

Finally, the Committee on Labor and Development proposed the creation of a special commission for Afro-descendants within the Ministry of Labor in order to formulate strategies, approaches, and policy for this community. Members also called for increased, employment-related capacity building through state finance and technical expertise, taking account “ancestral economic models” of the Afro-descendant community, and to establish communication networks to enable contact and interaction between the different communities. Concretely, the Committee proposed the creation of an Economic and Regional Development Plan, as well as a Social Economy Bank (or mutual aid fund) for Afro-descendants with “differential and preferential” treatment by the State (Primer Informe, 2012).

These two conferences, and the proposals generated as a result of the participants’ efforts, reflect the rising capacity of the organizations to articulate demands and make sound policy recommendations as a community, in a more or less unified manner. Moreover, the presence of state officials at these conferences sheds light on the legitimacy given to these demands, showing that the issues discussed are in the state’s policy agenda.

**Reaching out to the State**

*Partnering with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

The organizations have increasingly reached out to the State in other ways as well. Two of the organizations interviewed have been actively involved with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: IARPIDI and Asociación Civil África y su Diáspora.
The Committee of Afro-descendants and Africans within the Civil Society Consultative Council of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was launched on October 8th, 2008. The meeting held at the inauguration of the committee was organized into two working groups; the first group addressed public policy and affirmative action for African women in Argentina, and the second group addressed issues related to policies of affirmative action and care for migrants and refugees. This second group was coordinated by Celestín Nengumbi Sukama (President of IARPIDI) and Andrés Mandros (Secretary of Asociación Civil África y su Diáspora) (Sukama, 2009). Officials present were Ambassador Oscar Laborde, director of the Civil Society Consultative Council of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ariel Fernández, Director of the Department of Sub-Saharan and African Affairs, and other members of the Ministry. The issues centered on diagnosing problems affecting the Afro-descendant population in Argentina, identifying solutions, and implementing public policies to solve them. These focused on the fight against racism and discrimination, the development of Afro-descendants, and the fight for equal rights.

The most important activities of the Committee include the creation of the National Council of Afro Organizations of Argentina known as CONAFRO, and the First Afro Culture and Human Rights Meeting of Argentina (Primer Encuentro de Derechos Humanos y Cultura Afro de la Argentina).

The meeting on Human Rights, organized by Asociación Civil África y su Diáspora, was held between the 18th and 20th of November 2009 and focused on the following goals: to promote the creation of a sociocultural and political Afro group through which affirmative human rights policies can be strengthened; continue fighting against racism and discrimination, and revalue
Afro culture and identity; give visibility to the African presence and cultural diversity in the
country; and finally, publicize the different African cultural expressions as fundamental tools for
resistance and empowerment (Primer Encuentro de Derechos Humanos, 2009).

A year after the committee was established, the Civil Society Consultative Council of the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Argentina, headed by Ambassador Oscar Laborde, signed an
agreement with two Afro-descendant organizations, Asociación África y su Diáspora and
Díaspora Africana de la Argentina (DIAFAR) to create the National Council of Afro
Organizations of Argentina (CONAFRO), on the 26th of November 2010 (Tiempo Argentino,
2011). The objective of this council is to formulate public policies to improve the social
situation of Afro-descendants in Argentina (Consejo Nacional, 2014). At the launch of the
program, the organizations presented a study, Sociocultural and Sociodemographic Perspectives
of the Afro-descendant and African population in Buenos Aires, a joint investigation with the
Institute of Sociology of the University of Buenos Aires (Página 12, 2010).

Partnering with the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security

The conference "Afro Work and Culture in Argentina" held on the 15th of March, 2011,
was organized by the Ministry of Labor and held in the Faculty of Arts of the University of
Buenos Aires. The participating organizations and entities were the National Council of Afro
Organizations, Asociación Misibamba, Díaspora Africana de la Argentina, and Asociación
África y su Diáspora. In addition, members of the academic community included representatives
and faculty of the University of Buenos Aires’ Labor Relations degree program, as well as
professors teaching Sociology and Postcolonial Studies, and Labor Law and Collective Labor
Relations within the Faculty of Sociology (Sukama, 2011). Officials present were the Minister of Labor, Employment, and Social Security, Carlos Tomada; Undersecretary for Labor Relations, Álvaro Ruiz; and the Minister of Education, Alberto Sileoni, while panelists included activists from the participant organizations and academic experts on Afro-Argentine and labor affairs (Sukama, 2011). The discussions centered on fairness and equity in labor relations, visibility, equality, slavery, informal labor, and the need to change the terminology from “black” labor to “informal” or “unregistered” labor, with the aim to stimulate debate and call for more studies and analysis related to discrimination and employment. The Secretariat of Labor Relations of the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security published a book containing the panelists’ presentations, titled *Trabajo y Cultura Afro en la Argentina* (Ruiz, 2011).

**Regularization of Migrants from Senegal and the Dominican Republic**

Another kind of activism in supporting new members of the Afro-Argentine community can be seen in the initiative aiming for immigrants to become legally established in Argentina. Among other civil society and human rights organizations, IARPIDI was active in the formulation of the Special Regime for Migration Regularization of Foreigners of Senegalese and Dominican Nationality, containing measures that broaden the rights of migrants and facilitate the attainment of residency status for migrants from these countries, reducing vulnerability arising from an irregular immigration status (Sukama, 2013). The special regime, which grants an exception under the Migration Act 25.871 for citizens of the mentioned countries, entered into force on the 16th of January, 2013, and was valid for 180 days (6 months) (Sukama, 2013). The exception suspends the legal requirement of having entered the country legally (for Senegalese
citizens) and in the case of Dominicans provides for the inconvenience caused by arriving as tourists before the new consular visa regime that was implemented in August 2012 (DNM, 2013). At the launch date, 814 nationals of the Dominican Republic and 804 Senegalese nationals had signed up for the measure, and by March 8th, 2013, 631 migrants had received their residency (DNM, 2013).

**Commemoration and Recognition: Afro-Argentine and African Culture Day
and Paseo de las Tres Culturas**

Last but not least, the unanimously approved Act which established the 11th of October as “African-Argentine Culture Day” (Día de la Cultura Africano-Argentina) is the result of the impulse of the Cape Verdean cultural group La Cabunda de Ensenada as well as other members of the Afro-Argentine community, other institutions and the director of the Historical Archive of the Province, Claudio Panella (InfoNews, 2011). As mentioned in the earlier section about affirmative action in Argentina, the date marked by the Act was established in memory of Maria Remedios del Valle, a black captain who fought for independence under the leadership of Manuel Belgrano (InfoNews, 2011).

As for Ley 26.852 that was passed nationally in 2013, designating November 8th as Afro-Argentine and Afro Culture Day, it was supported and advanced by the members of APOAA organizations, according to members of the organizations interviewed as well as the media (Infourbanas, 2013). Unión Caboverdeana (UC) pointed out that members of UC had been working with a different legislator, María Rachid, to pass the same law, with the difference that it included a series of provisions for more affirmative types of measures concerning culture;
however, the bill did not advance because Ley 26.852, containing two articles, was passed first. The other version of the bill was titled “Fomenting of Respect and Promotion of African-Argentine Culture” and listed provisions on strengthening and respecting the “cultural rights” of Africans and Afro-Argentines, and like the law passed in La Plata, proposing to designate the same date (October 11th) under the same name, African-Argentine Culture Day (Proyecto de Ley Cultural, 2013).

The bill contains 12 Articles. Articles 1 through 4 are general dispositions and refer to fomenting the cultural rights of Africans and Afro-descendants in Argentina, placing it as an integral part of Argentine identity, requiring the National Secretariat of Culture to develop activities related to African and Afro-descendant culture every October 11th, and incorporating it into school calendars (Proyecto de Ley Cultural, 2013).

Articles 5 through 8 designate the National Secretariat of Culture as the authority to implement and enforce the promotion of artistic production that is free of censorship, promoting diversity, and recovering sites, spaces and monuments important to African-Argentine culture. It should also guarantee the artistic development of the community by formulating public policies, advancing infrastructure, carrying out studies and diagnostics, and publishing these; in addition, the Secretariat is required to provide resources and promote the economic potential of cultural activities by supporting fairs, exhibitions, etc., should partner with international organizations in the development of the above, as well as with local institutions and universities. Lastly, Articles 8 through 12 require the Secretariat to create a Consultative Council made up of members of the African-Argentine community and calls upon it to meet regularly (Proyecto de Ley Cultural, 2013).
As another example of success, Misibamba mentioned the designation of the *Paseo de las tres Culturas* or “Walkway of the three Cultures” in Santa Fe, capital of Santa Fe province, which was previously called *Paseo de las dos Culturas* (Walkway of the two Cultures) in homage to Argentina’s Spanish and indigenous roots. The third root of Argentina’s heritage, as Misibamba and the other organizations have repeatedly noted, is the African root. The change had been agreed upon and communicated by the Municipality of Santa Fe on December 3rd, 2009, which announced at the time that “against all historical inquiries into our origins as a nation, it was not taken into account that the founding cultures of our nation were: European, Indigenous and African incorporated from the very foundation of our society, who provided features of their own culture and origins in the architecture of the society of Santa Fe” (El Litoral, 2009). The plaque in honor of these two cultures situated on the walkway was replaced by one that included the African, third root, a measure which was advanced by *Casa de la Cultura Indo-Afro-Americana*, who invited Misibamba to take part in the inaugural ceremony organized by the municipal government on the 20th of April, 2011. The plaque now reads “*Paseo de las tres Culturas. En honor a la memoria de los pueblos originarios, africanos y europeos reunidos en esta Ciudad. Santa Fe, Abril de 2011.*”

3. Conclusion

Racism against Afro-descendants in Argentina falls into one of the five categories Van Dijk (2005) described for this country’s case and also analyzed by Grimson (2005), the one against “negros” used to refer to people of mixed descent, especially when they belong to the

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42Walkway of the three Cultures. In honor of the memory of the indigenous peoples, Africans and Spaniards gathered in this city. Santa Fe, April 2011.
popular sectors of society, and specifically against Afro-descendants, as Villalpando et al. (2005), Gomes (2007), and Sutton (2008) concluded.

But, as Wade (2010) put it, Afro-descendants in Latin America are seen as both included and excluded from society. What seems to occur is that Afro-descendants are not only discriminated against as such, but also seen as Others, as not Argentine, which is evidenced by the efforts of Misibamba, and other organizations to make African descendants in Argentina not automatically be seen as strangers or foreigners, and reflects the exoticism suggested by Bellotti (2010) and Morales (2011).

Exoticism could be judged as benign and ignorant curiosity, but in the Argentine case the black other is seen in a bad light. An example of Taguieff’s (2001) heterophobia, where the other is evaluated as different but not in a good way, leads us into the type of racism which manifests itself as a reinforcement of whiteness where “black” is associated with negative things and “white” or people of European ancestry are linked with positive things as mentioned by Gomes (2007) very specifically and Van Dijk (2005) generally, and especially by Duany (2000), Golash-Boza (2010), Skidmore (1993), and Wright (1990) who found this to be a phenomenon across Latin America. This was mentioned by many respondents and described by Unión Caboverdeana when explaining the ill connotations and uses of the word “negro” in Argentina, in addition to the denial of any racism (Duany, 2000; Winant, 1992) with the explanation that the word negro is only used for an attitude. This also explains the wish to “pass” as white, a phenomenon described by Sollors (1997) and Wehnert (2010), why some Afro-Argentines wanted to be “Negro Usted” instead of “Negro Che” as mentioned by Gomes (2007), through a
mechanism of social whitening suggested by Golash-Boza (2010) by aspiring to material wealth and social status.

We have seen examples of racist attitudes and experiences. Sutton (2008, p. 109) finds that Argentines who are considered as “others” have experienced invisibility, mistreatment, violence, been erased from history, economic disadvantage, evictions and territorial expulsion, racism by the authorities, stereotyped media representations, and environmental racism. This can be seen in the following situations: Roberts’ (1999) invisibility and the erasure from history through focusing on the “disappearance” of Afro-Argetines, (a partial absence argued by Andrews (1989) to have been from miscegenation and other factors but not a disappearance) and the personal experiences of the activists interviewed; mistreatments such as being called “negro” in a derogatory way, or as participants in the youth conference mentioned, being arrested for loitering; evictions like the ones that members of Movimiento Afrocultural (forced to leave from their original location), and members of the Misibamba community experienced (by being forced to move from San Telmo to the outskirts of the city, similarly to Biehl’s (2005) technologies of invisibility and Hammond’s (2008) description of removing people from the “gaze of the public”) as well as expropriations of land, as described in the National Assembly to be common in some provinces such as Santiago del Estero, Corrientes, Tucumán, Córdoba, and Catamarca; environmental racism through mining and the use of pesticides as described in the National Assembly’s action plan; and finally, the police mistreatment and murder of José Delfín Acosta Martínez, a community member and representative of Movimiento Afrocultural who died in police custody and whose case has not yet been resolved.
Purposeful whitening as a state policy, as described by Andrews (1989), Shumway (1991) and Windus (2003) was mentioned specifically by Misibamba, Movimiento Africultural, and ONIRA, as well as indirectly by all the organizations interviewed, showing that they ascribe to this theory and use it to explain what happened to the Afro-Argentine population, and to explain why society thinks the way it does today.

The aforementioned instances of racism had and continue to have an effect on Afro-Argentine identity, as mentioned earlier in terms of low self-esteem and denial of one’s heritage. However, the community of Afro-descendants in Argentina is engaging in a redefinition of the African diaspora identity from a position of cultural difference, as Hall (1989) suggested.

Wade (2008) suggests that in Latin America, the collective fight against racism, and the idea of the African diaspora as a constantly transforming process, can be elements of cohesion and therefore conducive to a unified black identity across borders (also Hall, 1989, p. 135). There are very strong indications of both (recognized by the fact that each organization engages in some form of antidiscrimination). We can see a very strong common, recurring element within the organizations and their members’ identities in the “imagining Africa” exercise as Hall (1989) described, as it is present in the descriptions of the organizations themselves, in the need to reconstruct history and educate others about it, and in drawing the contours of identity, nationality, and belonging. For some it is more recent and tangible, most obviously for the Cape Verdean and other African-nation communities, while for others it is more distant and unknown, as it is for the descendants of slaves, and for Afro-Latin Americans from other countries who are now in Argentina. In this, and in many of the cases we saw of the descriptions of black identities
in Argentina, we can see the manifestation of what Whitten & Torres (2008) explained as the rejection of whiteness and the affirmation of blackness.

At the same time, there is a lack of consensus on what is included in the idea of “blackness in Argentina.” Is the true Afro-Argentine the one who is the descendant of slaves? What about *mestizaje*? Or is it more all-encompassing like some respondents suggested, that the combination of a) presence of African genes and b) residing in Argentina, are the only requirements? As Cottrol (2007), Morrison (2012), and Telles (2009) mention, group consciousness is hampered by racial categories and whitening and we can see this in the description of Movimiento Afrocultural during the youth conference and assembly, where some people preferred to identify with their indigenous side, opting to use that racial category to avoid identifying as black, due to the stigma that Liboreiro (1999) and Duany (2000) write of, among others. The *mestizaje* described by Martínez-Echazábal (1998) and Briones (2006) is reflected here, but the mestizo identity is overshadowed by this stigmatization of blackness.

Much of this clearly causes internalized racial oppression as described by Pyke (2010), and the phenomenon that Yoshino (2006) calls “covering,” as well as the specific descriptions of self-denial of blackness in Argentina by Liboreiro (1999), Schávelzon (2007), and Segato (2007). Both internalized racial oppression and covering are pervasive and have been brought up by many of the respondents. Some examples of this are the descriptions of the search for identity which motivated the founding of ONIRA, the silence and denial of heritage its members experienced during childhood, similar to that of members of Misibamba, as well as the various campaigns proposed in the Action Plan of APOAA (Permanent Assembly of Afro-Descendant Organizations of Argentina) especially by the Committee of Youth to “raise self-esteem.”
The exercise of defining one’s identity in terms of what we just described (racial categories, an idea of Africa, history) indicates that race is a social construct (Blank et al., 2004; Ratcliffe, 2004; Rattansi, 2007; Sutton, 2008) – those at the conference who were of mixed heritage but chose to identify as indigenous instead of black, reflect a choice, a construction, on the basis of a social decision, taking the aforementioned issues into account.

In addition, inequalities along racial lines suggested by Lin & Harris (2008) and De Ferranti et. al (2004) clearly still exist, and in the words of one of the interviewees, they manifest in modern versions as the occupations of Afro-descendants in Argentina still seem to be in employment such as janitors, concierges, drivers, or cleaning ladies and nannies. Organizations all mentioned the need for inclusion, the policies included in the APOAA action plan indicate the need for greater access to services, rights, decent employment and housing, needs that were diagnosed by Villalpando et al. (2005).

There is evidence that the Afro-descendant community in Argentina is carrying out a strong lobby for placing Afro issues onto the government agenda, and is experiencing some success in this respect. This is reflected through November 8th becoming Afro-Argentine and African Culture Day both on a provincial level in the province of Buenos Aires, as well as on a national level, in an indication of recognition of the community. Additionally, the plaque in Paseo de las tres Culturas or “Walkway of the three Cultures” in the Santa Fe, capital of Santa Fe province, is another instance of recognition of the “third root” making up the society of Argentina, as Misibamba refers to it. Lastly, the concrete measure facilitating the attainment of residency for Senegalese and Dominican immigrants is another example.
The analysis of the types of affirmative action already implemented in Argentina, and those being formulated, is very interesting. We can see various types, both in the “individual” type (in the form of antidiscrimination) as well as the “collective group-based” type (Kellough, 2006), within which are included upward mobility, equal opportunity, and career development types. We also find “backward-looking” or compensatory policies, as well as integrative types (Anderson, 1998). However we do not find Htun’s (2004) “extreme” forms of the type associated with Kellough (2006) and Sowell’s (2004) “goals and timetables” and “numerical” or quota types.

As one of the aims of antiracism efforts, the main focus of most of the organizations is first and foremost to combat the idea that there are no blacks in Argentina which constitutes a form of invisibilization (as mentioned by Andrews, 1989; Frigerio, 2000a; Picotti, 2001; Villalpando et. al, 2005), fighting against the assumption that Afro-Argentines are considered not to exist, as in Roberts’ (1999) definition of the mechanism in invisibility. This can be seen by the many strategies of visibility carried out by the organizations such as cultural programs, teaching history in schools, and partnering with the state through the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Social Development.

Stakeholders see recognition as a form of reparation or redress, as the most important first step in a line of necessary reparations, so in essence they emphasize the type of affirmative action that was categorized by Anderson (1998) as “backward-looking policies” which focus on reparation for past wrongs.

The arguments for preferential treatment by the organizations seem to rest mostly on the justice type of argument described by Anderson (1998), which includes antidiscrimination,
integrative, and compensatory measures, as well as the argument for democracy, whereby affirmative action would amplify democratic representation (Anderson, 1998). (We will see later that this fits in nicely with a multicultural view of democracy). This surfaces by the organizations antidiscrimination campaigns in the action plan of APOAA. The expansion of democracy and the recognition of a diverse population is considered important for development and for having an inclusive society (Calderón & Szmukler, 2004) and for policy making as well (Norman, 2011), so this suggests that the focus chosen by the organizations is oriented in a direction that is promising with respect to reaching those goals.

As Kellough (2006) and Anderson (1998) mention, the preferential nature of these proposals are reflected in that it specifically targets Afro-descendants in Argentina. Within the antidiscrimination type of policy, we saw that all the organizations take this as a fundamental goal in changing attitudes towards blacks in Argentina, and actively shape and participate in activities that raise awareness of blackness within the community and in the greater public sphere (pushing for awareness and educational campaigns on issues of racism, including an Afro-Argentine perspective in history). This is done through the CONAFRO (National Council of Afro Organizations of Argentina), proposed in APOAA’s action plan focusing on institutionalized racism in the health and education systems among others, and indirectly through Afro-Argentine presence at the 2001 Durban conference against racism, which had a direct effect on the creation of the INADI as well as the National Plan against discrimination.

In terms of affirmative action as a compensatory measure and policy of redress, recognition is seen as the main form of compensation for purposeful denial and invisibilization, as each organization focuses on raising awareness and including the subject in history books in
an effort to make the community and the history visible. This in itself is taken as a form of redress, because as Misibamba and most of the organizations have emphasized, Argentina has a historic debt to the Afro-Argentines to recognize their contribution to the nation. This was publicly recognized by Ambassador Oscar Laborde from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the APOAA conference in March 2012 when he expressed that the state needs to apologize to Argentina for not recognizing the contribution of Afro-descendants to the country.

Other actions are seen as compensatory as well, but these also fall into the category of “collective and group-based” policies, the second type of affirmative action policy presented by Kellough (2006). Within the collective and group-based policy category, Kellough (2006) includes policies that seek upward mobility, equal opportunity, and career development. Anderson’s (1998) “integrative” category belongs to this group as well. Examples of this are the CONAFRO proposal deepening equality of rights, development of Afro-Argentines; IARPIDI’s promotion of “the social inclusion and professional integration of these people in Argentine society” through inclusive public policy, promoting equal rights, inclusion, and nondiscrimination; the conference “Afro Employment and Culture in Argentina”, where the discussion focused on fairness and equity in labor relations, visibility, equality, slavery, informal labor, and language using “black” to denote illegal or informal labor; the declaration of the youth conference includes with the aim to “deepen democracy and social, cultural and political inclusion”; and lastly, the goals of the National Assembly of Afro-descendants conference, which were visibilization, social transformation, deeper equality and equity, nondiscrimination, social inclusion, with an emphasis on anywhere between human rights and social development to education and Afro culture, gender, youth, health, aging persons, communication, housing and
environment, and work and development, where proposals ranged from general to financial support in these areas.

If we look at Cobb et al.’s (1976) categorization of the formal and public agenda, the fact that the two laws designating African-Argentine Culture Day (Buenos Aires province) and the Afro-Argentine and Afro Culture Day (federal government) were passed, and the contact between different ministries and the organizations (the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and of course the Secretariat of Human Rights), as well as recognition of the organizations as official representatives of a certain sector of civil society with their representation in entities such as the National Council of Afro Organizations of Argentina, as Burstein (1991) suggested was a way to effect policy change, we can see that policies for Afro-Argentines are on the formal agenda. In other words, in Birkland’s (2007) four stages of agenda setting, where the instances incrementally gain importance moving from general issues to State-promoted policy, official recognition of the Afro-Argentines is on the decision agenda judging from the previous examples. But how did the issues get there?

First of all, the organizations converge on a causal story, which, according to both Burstein (1991) and Birkland (2007), is conducive to placing issues on the agenda. The story includes historical elements such as the legacy of African slavery, the contribution of Africans to the establishment of the Argentine nation, the systematic invisibilization and denial of these facts, and the lingering consequences of slavery, the persistence of racism, and the continuation of inequalities.
A second reason is that agenda setting results from strong input through Cobb et. al’s (1976) outside initiative, that of activities carried out by organizations and civil society entities, which is evidenced by several organizations’ close involvement in the passing of both Afro-Argentine Day laws, the presence of organizations and representatives in the Civil Society Consultative Council of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the INADI, the organizing of the Afro Employment conference, and indirectly through transnational organizations at the Durban conference against racism, for example.

Another, third mechanism has to do with the factors Burstein (1991) suggested to be important, which in our case have shown to be persistence, as evidenced by the many years of activism, and the involvement in the Durban conference; and both government openness and usefulness to those in power, which were not only pointed to by stakeholders but also resulted from the adherence to a multicultural agenda suggested by Frigerio & Lamborghini (2011b), and because the government is fulfilling the expectations of the international community on respecting human rights and defining democracy as celebrating and protecting diversity as Wade (2008) posits, showing that it is indeed a democracy hence it must be open to these issues.

Fourth, this last point, along with the indigenous and black mobilization described by (Hale, 2002; Vom Hau & Wilde, 2009; Yashar, 2005), possibly creates Kingdon’s (1995) “window of opportunity”, also suggested by Frigerio & Lamborghini (2011b) as being a “structure of opportunities” revolving around Kymlicka’s (1995) politics of difference, of which the organizations are able to take advantage.

However, more feisty preferential policies, those that are dubbed “extreme” by Htun (2004) do not seem to have made it onto the official agenda just yet. There is no evidence of
“goals and timetables” (Kellough, 2006; Sowell, 2004). This is shown by the fact that the bill containing preferential-type policies in cultural issues, promoting the restoration of cultural spaces and providing funding for activities related to art and culture supported by one of the organizations did not prosper, and it has been pointed out by Becerra (2010), Gomes (2012), and Pascale (2010) that social policy targeting Afro-descendants specifically is not in place yet. This could be one of the consequences of the disarray and lack of consensus on certain issues mentioned by the organizations themselves.

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This thesis aims to collaborate in advancing knowledge about the debates, rights, and policy connected to affirmative action for Afro-descendants by looking at the case of Argentina. Through seeking historical and cultural recognition, aiming for a break with the way Argentine history is perceived and taught, and by using a constellation of opportunities created by globalization, the minority rights revolution, the rise of multiculturalism, and government openness, Afro-Argentine groups are employing a combination of cultural and rights-based approaches to position themselves and are succeeding in setting an agenda, having yet to articulate demands with more agreement among stakeholders.

In spite of the invisibility experienced by Afro-Argentines and Afro-descendants in Argentina, the state is appropriating and accepting civil society organizations’ strategies in their effort to formulate affirmative action policies. Both the agency and activities of organizations carried out over the course of the years as well as state “openness” to these themes as a result of multicultural, globalization, and minority rights processes on a global scale are important influencing factors.
The research supports existing literature and finds that recognition of the contributions of African descendants to the edification of Argentina is understood as a form of compensatory affirmative action, and that the proposed policies reflect both individual-type (antidiscrimination) and collective-type (upward mobility, equal opportunity) measures. While there is evidence of two laws recognizing Afro-Argentines (African-Argentine Culture Day on October 11th, and Afro-Argentine and Afro Culture Day on November 8th), there is no evidence of the implementation of the more substantial collective-type policies. So far, these have been proposed through a network of organizations, the APOAA (Permanent Assembly of Afro-Descendant Organizations of Argentina) and presented to the Ministry of Social Development.

While affirmative action formulation and implementation is underway, racial discrimination and whitening are resilient. The tensions in the definitions of identity and the underlying debate over equality and difference are reflected in current policy formulation discussions among the organizations.

These dynamics have implications for future Afro-Latin American agenda setting methods using equality or difference arguments with the goal of different types of affirmative action, and for minority rights agenda setting in general, in the face of challenges involving methods of gaining and maintaining state attention. It remains to be seen whether the Argentine state truly does “care” or is only giving façade-like concessions to demands as a means to legitimate itself in both a local and global context that increasingly popularizes human rights issues and equates democracy with celebrating diversity. In order for a more equal society to be possible, it is essential to keep working, and to continue exploring ways to reach that goal for all communities.
The outcomes raise a host of questions. What about the controversy over the viability and desirability of affirmative action? Who in the state, and the public, is against? Is that maybe one of the reasons why the efforts to pass more preferential policies as part of the Afro-Argentine and African Culture Day did not prosper? Was there a power play or did it simply not gain enough support?

Also, how long is the current “window of opportunity” going to stay open? Will policies be moving beyond recognition as a form of redress, and will the concrete proposals taking Afro-descendants into account when it comes to housing, education, health, and other issues, be written into policies and implemented? What will happen if there is a new government? Will it be detrimental to those organizations that have good relations with the current government? A few mentioned the political nature of their organization, and the current “progressive governments” as being a positive factor in the promotion of these issues. Will those who have strong alliance now suffer later? Will the issues, in Birkland’s (2007) terms, lose elite attention?

The persistence of democratic political regimes in Latin America suggests that change is unlikely to be drastic but likely to come in a piecemeal form. The process is, alas, inevitably prone to ups and downs. For example, the fate of the proposals submitted to the Ministry of Social Development remains unclear; pessimism among the organizations is rife about the gap between excellent existing legislation and the lack of enforcement; as well as doubt of political will to push more substantial preferential policies through. We may need to stick with celebrating Afro-Argentine and African Culture Day for the time being, but the activism, should it last, will certainly continue to push the state through reform.
Further research is needed to explore the above questions and in tracking developments in the next few years. An important possible future line of research would analyze affirmative action policy not from the organizations’ point of view, but from within the state: how politicians and legislators relate to it, what their viewpoint is, and any indications to future trends. Another line of investigation could take a look at the relationships between organizations and the dynamics of who creates definitions and how, alliances with each other, alliances with key officials within the government, and how international networking has changed, if it has. Gender-related themes were raised by several individuals and organizations as central to defining activities, focus, goals, and identity. Perhaps analyzing gender relations in the Afro-Argentine community could shed some light on current dynamics and allow for proposals and diagnosis. An investigation into current education policy on racism and history would also be useful. Last but not least, this research would benefit highly from a national viewpoint taking into account all the provinces in Argentina, regional organizations, municipal and civil society initiatives, and the role they play in the agenda setting and affirmative action policy formulation process both locally and nationally.
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173


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178


183


