

Equity and exclusion *in Latin America and the Caribbean: the case of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples*

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The purpose of this article is to show and explore some basic aspects of the situation in which Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples live in Latin America and the Caribbean. Factors such as racism and discrimination will be analysed in an effort to interpret the causes that have resulted in millions of people in the region, from a variety of ethnic and racial origins, living in poverty and marginalization. It is suggested that the way to deal with this problem is to transform systems of exclusion and discrimination (which are cultural, economic, legal and political in nature) at the root by designing strategies ranging from formal recognition of identities and collective rights to public policy-making, stronger regional and international cooperation programmes and far-reaching reform of the State. The active principle underlying the application of these measures should be a new “citizenship” based on the promotion of cultural diversity and difference.

I

Introduction

Discrimination and racism are an integral part of the problems afflicting Latin America and the Caribbean, and they have brought poverty, exclusion and inequality in their wake for millions of the region's inhabitants, mainly among Indigenous peoples and the Afro-descendant population. The aim of this article is to contribute to the debate by providing material for a discussion that should involve the whole of society. The causes and effects of racism and discrimination lie at the root of our Latin American societies and cultures; this is not just a problem for specialists or for those who are victims of or feel themselves to be affected by this scourge. Overcoming discrimination based on ethnicity and race is part of the task of building a citizenship option that can ensure respect for collective rights and bring better living conditions to over a third of the region's population. It is not too much to say that by jointly creating a future for Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples that is based on equity and equality, society will also be determining the future prospects for regional integration and governance. The scale of the problems facing these populations is a source of challenges not just for the market, but also for democracy and State reform, which means there needs to be active commitment by the region's governments. For this reason, discursive analytical frameworks now need to make way for real debate and constructive proposals. This is part of what the present article attempts.

1. Analytical basis and framework

In this article, we shall look first at Indigenous peoples, namely those who are the direct descendants of peoples inhabiting Latin America and the Caribbean when Europeans arrived in the fifteenth century, who have their own language and culture and who share particular world views and ways of living that are different from those of the West. This definition does not mean we are unaware that there are now large conglomerations of Indigenous people, particularly in cities, who do not speak their original languages and who have adapted to or been assimilated into urban sociocultural practices. From a political point of view, the category of "Indian" is the extreme reflection of the situation of colonial

dominance to which a particular human group has been submitted. This category simultaneously combines biological (racial and racist) aspects and cultural aspects. Being "Indian" can be seen as a reflection of the subordination and denial of one human group in relation to another, self-constructed group that holds itself up as superior (Bónfil, 1991 and 1992).

The main reason for taking an overview that includes both Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples is that from the point of view of equity, these populations suffer similar problems of economic, social, cultural and political inequality, chiefly when they are compared with other social groups, especially those who are white. Ethnic and racial origin apparently has a major influence on people's position in the social structure, discrimination and exclusion being the mechanisms through which a dominant group maintains and justifies the social and economic subordination of others, reproducing and perpetuating inequity.

At present, the Indigenous population makes up between 8% and 15% or so of the region's total population, while those of African descent (black or mulatto) account for 30%. Irrespective of the exact figures, the problem for these peoples is that after centuries of exclusion and denial they are still being treated as minorities, even though in many cases they are not.¹ Most people of African descent live in poverty and have been denied the right to an education that takes their cultural, linguistic and religious specificities into account. In many cases they have lost their main means of subsistence (such as land, territory and natural resources), and for decades they have been forced to emigrate to large urban centres where they engage in insecure, poorly paid, low-quality work. These evils have their historical background in colonial domination and exclusion, in the efforts of national States to impose homogeneity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and in social and economic structures that operate to this day. Conversely, skin colour, culture or religion as

¹ There are at least three countries in the region where Indigenous people make up over 50% of the national population (Peru, Bolivia and Guatemala) and more than a dozen countries where the black and mixed-race population makes up over 50% (see the table in section II below).

reasons for exclusion and racism are mechanisms socially and culturally created by society to give this exclusion some pseudoscientific “justification”. In many countries, black or Indigenous people are still regarded as inferior or second-rate beings, and are excluded from the education system and relegated to the worst jobs. The direct consequence of this is the poverty to which millions of such people are condemned.

Recent economic developments have increased the social deficit, as growth has been below the region’s historical average and there have been serious distributive shortcomings (ECLAC, 1997), and this has widened the gap that needs to be bridged if greater equity is to be achieved. Poverty has worsened over the last decade, affecting more severely specific sectors of the population, such as Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, that have a historical deficit as regards access to economic benefits and recognition for their collective rights and identities.

Today’s ethnic and racial discrimination, largely inherited from Portuguese-Creole and Hispano-Creole colonialism, is the manifestation of renewed forms of exclusion and domination constituted into regimes of “internal colonialism” that created the myth of real integration. The integration of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples has actually had a largely symbolic character, while it cannot be verified in actual living conditions.

Poverty, marginalization and exclusion have become structural characteristics for Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. In the few comparative studies that have been done, the breakdown of poverty figures by ethnic and racial origin shows differences between these groups and the rest of the population. In the most extreme cases such as Guatemala, Mexico and Peru, the difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can be as much as 20 or 30 percentage points (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 1994).

The situation of Indigenous peoples today cannot be compared with what it was a few decades ago, when the majority lived in rural areas and were perceived by the State and by most people as poor peasants. In the 1970s this situation began to change drastically. There are still large Indigenous areas and territories, the so-called ancestral lands, but migration to the cities has created new residential areas inhabited by large Indigenous groups of rural origin, as well as successive generations descended from earlier migrations.

In the case of Afro-descendants, while many of them live in urban areas, particularly the region’s major

metropolitan areas, a growing number of those living in rural areas are now demanding to be included in land title and protection schemes.

Formal education is another nexus of inequity, not only because of access and coverage problems, but because educational systems, far from encouraging recognition of diversity and respect for collective rights, have sought to use education to assimilate and integrate different ethnic and racial groups into the “national identity” and culture.

In contrast to assimilationist positions with their tendency towards domination, in recent years a new set of strategies has arisen to address the problem of education among Indigenous people. These are experiments based on the principles of interculturality and bilingualism.² These educational models have been slow to spread, although in countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador and Guatemala they have become important at the national level. Current progress is largely due to the promotion of and support for interculturality and the rights of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples by Indigenous organizations themselves and by United Nations bodies, the Organization of American States (OAS) and international development agencies.

This progress has been made possible by the establishment of an international regulatory framework that has allowed more global treatment to be given to the problem of racism, discrimination and multiculturalism in international forums and domestically in numerous States. The greatest influence has been exerted by instruments generated within the United Nations, from the 1948 International Bill of Human Rights to the International Covenants on Human Rights approved by the General Assembly: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976) and its Optional Protocol (1976) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976). A similar influence has been exerted by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and different United Nations world conferences, such as those of Teheran (1968), Vienna (1993) and Beijing (1995).

Where the specific struggle against racism and discrimination is concerned, the United Nations has travelled a long road in the effort to foster debate and

² This strategy consists in teaching adults to read and write in both languages simultaneously, the subject-matter being productive development and microbusiness, environmental protection, gender equity, civil rights and community health, with the emphasis on reproductive health (Hernández, 1999).

awareness, the most important milestone being the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.³ In addition, 1971 was declared to be the International Year to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, and this was followed by three successive United Nations Decades to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1973-1983, 1983-1993 and 1994 to 2004).

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the promotion and support of both the civil and political rights and the economic, social and cultural rights of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples are based on ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and on the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Protocol of San Salvador), under the responsibility of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. At the United Nations, too, there has been discussion for a number of years of a universal declaration of the human rights of Indigenous peoples, while within the region OAS has been discussing an American declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples.

The progress that has been made in recognizing cultural diversity can be measured by the constitutional recognition that some countries have given to the Indigenous cultures and languages found within their national borders. Nonetheless, recent conflicts in countries such as Chile, Ecuador and Mexico show that a great deal still remains to be done when it comes to human rights, recognition for collective rights, multiculturalism and interculturality. It appears that ratifying conventions and enacting constitutional reforms is not enough to change existing patterns of ethnic and racial discrimination, which means that other measures need to be implemented and greater progress made with those already undertaken. Education, as it operates in most of the countries with Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations, is an example that demonstrates the need for public policies to be comprehensive and open as regards diversity and recognition for rights. Otherwise, there is the risk that any strategy will be reduced to ethnic or racial “add-ons” that will further isolate Indigenous and Afro-descendant people, thereby reproducing social exclusion.

³ This was offered for signing and ratification by the United Nations General Assembly (resolution 2106A (XX) of 21 December 1965) and came into force on 4 January 1969, after it had been ratified or subscribed to by 27 States, as a result of which the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was set up.

Education and technological progress –the spread of the Internet, for instance– may be effective mechanisms for integration in diversity and for democratization of access to knowledge and symbolic goods for all groups in society, without this leading to new forms of denial, assimilation and discrimination. Again, access to knowledge, new technologies and scientific advances is a universally recognized right that does not imply the suppression of any culture or prevent the use and preservation of any language, as article 27 of the 1976 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights declares.

But Indigenous and Afro-descendant people have alike been debarred not only from access to material and symbolic goods, to which the whole of society ought to have equal access, but also from the acquisition or recognition of their specific rights. The right to an identity, a language and a culture form part of the catalogue of demands that are now being added to those of an economic and social nature and that are intertwined with the acquisition of political rights as a regulating, legitimizing framework. The emergence of these “other demands” has created new political situations which, when States have failed to come to terms with or denied them, have cast doubt over the real prospects for social cohesion, equity and governance in certain of the region’s countries.

2. Background and key concepts

The importance of categories like race and ethnicity lies in the fact that, throughout history, physical and biological features such as skin colour and blood group or, again, the culture to which a person belongs, have meant inequality, discrimination and the domination of one social group by another, by reason of a supposed superiority or the idea that the dominating group has better and more legitimate rights than those of the devalued and excluded “other” (Oommen, 1994). Along with the concepts of gender and class, those of race and ethnicity sustain a variety of cultural, economic and social domination systems and mechanisms through which large groups of people are denied equitable access to rights and goods (both symbolic and material).

Race and ethnicity are concepts that have borne different meanings over time and that cannot be understood only in the light of the uses now made of them. There is a history behind them, a process of transformation into social constructs and categories unfolding into different meanings that have altered at the different times and in the different social, cultural

and political contexts where they have developed (Wade, 1997).

The construction of a terminology and an ideological structure for race dates back a long way, but the major period of development was from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century in Europe. Race began to be naturalized and put in “scientific” terms during the upsurge of the natural sciences in the Enlightenment. The naturalist Karl Linnaeus (1707-1778), for example, developed a system of classification by species and genus, a taxonomy of the natural world that categorized the different “human races” as species and subspecies. The classification was based on the physical characteristics and biological differences of the species classified, and these were assigned particular social and cultural attributes.

In this way, physical features and attributes came to form a whole, with culture and society apparently dominated by a natural determinant. The mechanism for classifying different human groups and cultures was constructed along the same lines as the one used for classifying plants or animals (insects, mammals, etc.). Anatomical measurements, head size and skin colour began to be classified as features of specific racial typologies, correlates of supposed levels of intelligence or stages of civilization.

Colonialism was to be a primary source for the emergence of ideas about racial differences between Europeans and the peoples they had “discovered”. The idea of European racial superiority, contrasted with the supposed “inferiority” and “savagery” of the periphery, was to be part of the historical process whereby cultural images of conquerors and conquered would be constructed (Said, 1996). In Europe from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, the idea of race was based on the gradual exclusion of those cultures and societies that were outside the Christian community.

During the nineteenth century, the development of racism in Europe experienced a number of turning points that would provide the basis for part of the future political discourse of the “dominant race” until the end of the Second World War. Towards the mid-nineteenth century, “scientific racism” reached its apogee with the spread of Darwin’s theories about evolution. The contradiction in it is that, just as this theoretical and intellectual development was reaffirming ideas about inferior and superior races, or races at different stages of evolution, slavery began to decline. But abolitionism arose because of imperatives inherent in industrial capitalism, which was more and more dependent on wage labour, and not because of changing ideas about

racial equality. On the contrary, the end of slavery and the parallel development of “social Darwinism” would allow the idea of racial inferiority to remain present without the “need” for a form of domination as spurious as the one that had subsisted until that time.

At the time when modern States were being created, the construction of European racism had its origin and expression in class ideology more than in the formation of nations and nationalisms. This is demonstrated by the fact that most manifestations of racism in modern States have occurred within national borders. Racism as a political action is used to justify internal domination processes more than colonial-type objectives of foreign domination (Anderson, 1983). If we look at the situation of Indigenous peoples and ethnic and national minorities in Latin America and the Caribbean from this point of view, the idea that there are internal colonialisms, to which a number of contemporary authors have alluded, becomes more compelling.

The political institutionalization of the exclusion and oppression of black people is clearly manifested in segregationist regimes –like that seen in the United States until the 1960s– and in those societies that, after abolition, moved from formal slavery to a system of domination or “informal slavery” that was even more complex than what had preceded it, as in the case of Brazil and some Afro-Caribbean States. The most significant episode in the modern history of race and inter-ethnic relations, however, is the arrival of the Nazi regime in Germany and its well known xenophobia and policy of exterminating Jews, gypsies and other peoples. This terrible experience had no precedent in human history, and it provided the starting point for the necessary expansion of human rights relating to “racial origin”. In this process, a key role was played by the United Nations which, starting with the dissemination of the International Bill of Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has led the debate about the idea of racial non-discrimination and thence the rejection of social inequalities or the denial of civil, political and cultural rights to particular groups of people, societies or cultures on the basis of racial criteria.

Nonetheless, the racial argument has continued to carry weight irrespective of biological “objectivity”, as part of the field of social construction. As in the case of gender, biology is the basis for the construction of images and stereotypes that vary by epoch, culture and society. Races exist not merely as ideas, however, but “as social categories of great tenacity and power”

(Wade, 1997, p. 14). This is why the notion of race remains active and important, and why it still has so much weight as a factor of social domination and exclusion. In fact, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination emerged as a way of checking the gradual advance and resurgence of new forms of racial discrimination in many member States.

On a different level, the concept of ethnicity is of more recent usage than that of race and is less value-laden. Ethnicity comes from the Greek concept of *ethnos*, which means people or nation, and it has actually come into general use as a replacement for the discredited word "race". While "race" refers to phenotypic characteristics, ethnicity refers to culture and, specifically, to cultural differences.

There are at least three strands of thought regarding the meaning of ethnicity. One view is that it is a primordial or naturally existing quality. The contrary view to this essentialist outlook is that ethnicity is situational, membership of an ethnic group being a matter of the attitudes, perceptions and feelings of the individual concerned. A third approach emphasizes the historical and symbolico-cultural attributes of ethnic identity. According to this definition, an ethnic group "is a type of cultural collectivity that emphasizes the role of myths of ancestry and historical memories, and that is known by one or more differentiating cultural features, such as religion, customs, language or institutions" (Smith, 1997, p. 18).

Race and ethnicity converge and diverge in meaning because both concepts reflect social (and cultural) constructs that are produced and manipulated in response to different contexts. The difference, as already mentioned, lies in the fact that one is constructed primarily on the basis of phenotypic characteristics, while the other is linked with ethnic identity. The concept of ethnicity has a direct relationship with that of identity; both vary greatly depending on context, perceptions and values. Behind this apparent conceptual instability, however, ethnicity has the capacity to reflect the cultural changes and geographical mobility of people in the modern world (Wade, 1997).

It needs to be pointed out that the idea of categories being socially constructed and subject to change does not mean that identities are unstable or precarious. They possess dynamism and a degree of "nomadism", particularly in the face of the temporal and spatial flights imposed by modernity and modernization. The permanence of identities, their great power to explain the construction of a sense of belonging or the idea of

an "us", of an alterity as the opposition or denial of the "other", clearly demonstrates their symbolic efficacy and their power of action in the social space.

Likewise, the concept of ethnic identity has greater depth and stability than that of "racial identity", as it is not only based on phenotypic characteristics and their signification, but is also related to a set of "attributes" that an ethnic society or community shares collectively, from one generation to the next. Smith (1997) mentions among other attributes: a collective name, a myth of common origin, one or more differentiating elements of collective culture, an association with a specific "homeland" and a feeling of solidarity towards significant sections of the population.

A second conceptual core is the one deriving from the behaviour and actions assumed by individuals, institutions and society in relation to race and ethnicity. This constitutes what may be called preconceptions of racism.

Discrimination and segregation are two concrete ways of expressing racism, and their basis is the idea of separating, distinguishing or differentiating one thing from another. Socioculturally, the two concepts are related to the inferior treatment given to a person or group for racial, religious or political reasons. According to Wieviorka (1992), segregation means keeping the racialized group at a distance, which is done by setting aside special spaces for it that the group can only leave under particular conditions. Discrimination, by contrast, entails a differentiated treatment in different spheres of social life, sometimes to the point of humiliation.

Racial and ethnic discrimination operates through a set of social and cultural mechanisms: one of them is prejudice. According to Giddens (1991), prejudice is "the opinions or attitudes held by members of one group towards those of others, while discrimination is actual behaviour towards them. Prejudice means holding preconceived viewpoints about an individual or group that are often based on rumour rather than direct evidence, viewpoints that are resistant to change even in the face of new information".

Giddens holds that prejudice operates through what he terms "stereotyped thinking", a system of categories that people use to classify their experiences. These classifications are organized by structuring a set of assessments and attributions that are transferred socially using certain characteristics such as inferiority, negativity or passiveness, in opposition to (racial) superiority, positivity and activeness. These attributions use the social group producing the stereotypes as a

reference point by means of a system of binary oppositions. Like gender and class attributions, ethnic and racial discrimination and prejudice are subject to

change and manipulation, and depend on the different historical circumstances and social processes experienced by societies.

II

Overview: the current situation of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples

The overview that follows seeks to show, in broad terms, some of the main demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. The aim is to bring to light in this way the aspects that, for reasons of equity, need to be addressed most urgently by the region's countries.

1. Indigenous peoples

a) *Population*

One way of approaching the current situation of the region's Indigenous population is to determine how large it is and where it is located geographically. The first obstacle to establishing the size and structure of the Indigenous population⁴ is that national censuses have been few and incomplete, and have been based on different criteria,⁵ which in some cases makes it hard or impossible to compare data among countries. There is now great demand, however, for research into people's ethnic origin. Indigenous people see censuses as an effective means of achieving a higher profile and a political instrument for reinforcing identity. For their part, States see censuses as decision-making and policy implementation instruments.

It is calculated that the Indigenous peoples of the region currently comprise between 33 and 35 million people, or approximately 8% of the continent's total population,⁶ and are subdivided into about 400 different

language groups. In some countries, however, they account for larger proportions: 81% in Bolivia, 50% in Guatemala, 40% in Peru, 35% in Ecuador and 13% in Mexico. In addition, although Indigenous peoples continue to be associated with the countryside, rural-urban migration and natural growth in the population of Indigenous origin in urban areas are tendencies that are becoming more and more apparent. In Chile, for example, it is calculated that some 80% of the 998,000 Indigenous people recorded in the 1992 census live in urban areas, most of them in the metropolitan area of the capital.

b) *Poverty and marginalization*

Most Indigenous people live in extreme poverty. Besides discrimination and racism, the main causes of this situation can be traced back to the liberal reforms of the nineteenth century which introduced the idea of private land ownership, thereby giving rise to a progressive loss of lands and the breakdown of community economies. This situation was aggravated by rural-urban migration and labour market participation (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 1994 and Plant, 1998).

In Chile, the inequity afflicting Indigenous people was so obvious by the early 1990s that they were deemed a priority group for government policy. In Bolivia, 75 children per 1,000 live births die before they are a year old, and most of these are of Indigenous origin (Schutter, 1994). In Mexico, over 50% of households in Indigenous areas have no electricity, 68% have no running water, 90% have no sewerage, and 76% have earthen floors. The 1990 census revealed that in areas where 30% or more of the population was Indigenous, 26% of all inhabitants aged between 6 and 14 did not go to school. Only 59% of those aged over 15 knew how to read and write and 37% had never been to school (Enríquez, 1998).

⁴ In the region, the term "Indigenous" covers a variety of groups or communities, ranging from the hunter-gatherers of the Venezuelan and Brazilian plains and forests, of whom there are some hundreds of thousands, to large agrarian societies in the Andean highlands of Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador, numbered in the millions.

⁵ In some cases (Chile), census records are created from questions about people's own view of themselves and their place in society, while in others (Bolivia, Guatemala) they are based on linguistic criteria.

⁶ For further details, see Peyser and Chakiel (1999).

c) *Migration*

Migration is one of the most important phenomena among Indigenous people today. Although its origins go back to colonial history, its greatest effects appeared in the twentieth century. The deterioration of peasant economies, the loss and diminution of community lands, the general lack of productive resources, population growth, the rise of the wage economy, poverty and the “cultural pull” of cities are some of the causes of migration, almost always from the countryside to the city.

In Mexico City, Bogotá, Santiago and Lima, Indigenous neighbourhoods have appeared and received successive waves of new migrants. These places have seen the creation of formal and informal networks and of neighbourhood, cultural, political and productive organizations whose unifying core is a sense of belonging or collective identity.

In the case of urban migrants, again, it is common for people to return to their home villages—the Aymara of northern Chile and the Bolivian Andes are examples—to celebrate local holidays, visit the dead or establish commercial relations with members of the community. In countries such as Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Guatemala and Mexico, there are complex Indigenous commercial networks that bind together remote and diverse places, in some cases beyond national frontiers. In certain instances it has been shown that many of the Indigenous people who emigrate to cities return to their places of origin after a few years, Mapuche women in Chile being an example.

In addition to migration, another phenomenon in recent decades has been population displacement. In past decades, countries such as El Salvador and Nicaragua suffered displacement of Indigenous populations due to civil wars. The same thing is happening now in conflict zones such as the state of Chiapas in Mexico and, particularly, Colombia, where the position of Indigenous people tends to worsen steadily. In certain areas of Colombia, the actions of armed groups and drug traffickers have created a pervasive climate of violence. The direct effects for different Indigenous groups include displacement and the threat of forced involvement in these activities.

d) *Work and employment*

The occupational profile of Indigenous people is difficult to determine, as there is a dearth of information on the subject. It can be supposed, however, that they occupy niches similar to those of non-Indigenous migrants. In Mexico, Guatemala, Peru and Chile, for

example, Indigenous people are segregated to some extent into specific jobs and areas of activity, such as trade (often informal), own-account working and domestic service (in the case of women).⁷ Indigenous people respond to the difficult employment conditions they face with a set of strategies combining urban-type occupations with small-scale selling of farm produce or seasonal employment on agro-industrial estates.

The main problems faced by Indigenous migrants seeking to participate in the urban labour market are structural in nature, and include their relative lack of schooling and their unpreparedness for the demands of the production system. Thus, their entry into the waged labour force takes place in insecure, informal conditions. Formal waged work, something that is characteristic of the modernization process, is beyond the reach of Indigenous groups that are newly arrived in cities (Pérez Sáinz, 1994).

e) *Education*

The exclusion of Indigenous people from education systems is clearly manifested in high illiteracy rates, particularly among older groups, and low averages for years spent in the education system, particularly at the intermediate and higher levels. In Ecuador, for example, only 53% of Indigenous people enter primary education, 15% secondary education and 1% university or higher education (PAHO, 1998). In Panama, according to the 1990 census, 15% of the population was illiterate in rural areas and 3.3% in urban areas, but 44.3% of the Indigenous population was illiterate. In Mexico, illiteracy levels in the regions with the most Indigenous people are twice or in many cases three times as high as among the rest of the population.

Educational access and coverage problems are compounded by those of pedagogical “relevance”. Until the early 1990s, the countries of the region, with a few exceptions, had not addressed the issue of interculturality and bilingualism. Hitherto, education for Indigenous people has been an instrument used by the dominant culture to take control of Indigenous cultures in the name of the “national culture”. A number of studies, however, have revealed the failure of this effort and the need to seek alternatives that can enable Indigenous societies to handle the codes of modernity without having to give up their ethnic identity, language and culture.

⁷ In Chile, 28% of economically active Mapuche women were in domestic service in 1992.

Current thinking stresses the need to move beyond the old approaches that have tried, among other things, to assimilate people who are culturally different. The new approaches seek to build bridges among cultures in contact whose only interchange is in the form of domination and subordination. The strategy is to remedy the lack of communication among cultures in the expectation that pedagogical efficacy will thereby be achieved (Durstun, 1998).

f) *Health*

Although there is no very accurate information available, ethnic minorities have fared worse in health terms than the population in general, and in almost all the region's countries they are excluded, in different ways and to differing degrees, from social health protection (ILO/PAHO, 1999).

Ethnic discrimination is one of the main causes of inequity in health care, the result being a situation of extreme poverty, poor health conditions and undernutrition. For decades, furthermore, discrimination against traditional medicine in favour of Western medicine has meant that the rich medical traditions of Indigenous peoples have been neglected or denied. In future, participatory community health management, shared learning programmes and appreciation and reinstatement of traditional medicine may be viable strategies for improving health indicators among Indigenous people (PAHO/ECLAC, 1997).

In Bolivia, the provinces with the largest number of Indigenous people are the ones that have the country's worst health indicators. Whereas in La Paz infant mortality is 106 per thousand live births, in all the Aymara provinces of Oruro and Potosi it stands at between 120 and 135 per thousand live births. In provinces with fewer Indigenous people, 70% of the population has access to health services, but in Quechua provinces such as Tapacarí the figure is only 11%. The highest incidence of infectious diseases is found among Guarani groups, with rates five to eight times higher than the national average (PAHO, 1998, vol. II).

In Venezuela, the health indicators of Indigenous people are also poor, particularly in the case of groups living in the forest and immigrant Indigenous groups. Between 58.3% and 84% of Yanomamis living in the country become infected with hepatitis B at some time in their lives, and this is the third main cause of death after malaria and malnutrition. In forest areas, despite some mass vaccination programmes being organized in Indigenous communities, diseases such as tuberculosis affect 167.9 out of every 100,000

Indigenous inhabitants, while the figure for non-Indigenous people is 27.7 (PAHO, 1998, vol. II).

In Panama, the provinces with the most Indigenous people are the ones with the worst health indices. In the province of Boca de Toro, for example, mortality from diarrhoea in recent years has been 34.4 per 100,000, as compared to a national rate of 6.4. In the administrative district of San Blas, the peak incidence of cholera in 1993 was 80 times the national average, while in 1994 the incidence of pneumonia was six times the national rate (PAHO, 1998).

g) *Political participation and representation*

The problem of political participation and representation for Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples is one of the worst manifestations of their exclusion and inequality. In recent decades, social movements and the political demands of Indigenous organizations have shown the need for States to reform political participation and representation thoroughly so that these are recognized as key elements in citizenship, integration and social cohesion, and in the democratic governance and stability of the region's countries.

In Bolivia, where 60% of the population is Indigenous, great efforts have been made to implement the commitments accepted by the country in relation to the recognition of Indigenous political, social and cultural rights. The political participation and representation of Indigenous people in Bolivia has been furthered by the enactment of the Popular Participation Act.

In Ecuador, CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador) has participated in the National Constitutive Assembly, proposed an Indigenous nationalities bill, taken part in the debate that preceded the passing of the Development Act (with which they are in disagreement) and participated in the general framework of State strategies and policies for Indigenous peoples and nationalities. By the same token, members of Indigenous organizations have attained high office at the national level. Despite this progress, however, these organizations complain that their participation in positions of authority and representative posts bears no proportion to the size of the Indigenous population and the level of organization it has attained.

The Chiapas conflict, the mobilizations in Ecuador and the conflicts on Mapuche lands in Chile show that Indigenous people are increasingly demanding a voice in decisions affecting their own destiny. In countries with large numbers of Indigenous people, legitimacy

and governance at the national or local level could be affected if the State does not heed their demands. In any event, whether the percentage of Indigenous people in a particular country's population is large or small should not be a determining or conditioning factor when it comes to recognition of the political participation and rights of Indigenous peoples.

h) *The environment, land and territory*

The relationship that Indigenous people have with land cannot be reduced to strictly economic and productive factors. Indigenous people have a holistic understanding of land and the environment that is conjoined with social, cultural, religious and economic aspects. To grasp this, it is necessary to apply the concept of territory, as ILO Convention 169 and Agenda 21 of the Rio Conference have done.

This point is important because the inequity and social imbalances deriving from the exclusion and marginalization of Indigenous people are directly related to the depletion of their natural resources and the diminution or loss of their ancestral territories. Some progress has in fact been made across the continent in recognizing the traditional rights of Indigenous people over territory, the environment and the ownership, administration and use of resources.⁸

In a number of countries, major development projects, while benefiting most of the population, tend to have adverse consequences for Indigenous people. In Colombia, deforestation and oil drilling are having a direct effect on Indigenous territories. In Venezuela, major development projects and new land use planning have combined with oil and coal concessions to displace different Indigenous groups from their traditional lands. In Chile, Mapuche-Pehuenche groups have fought hard to oppose the construction of six hydroelectric dams and power stations (one of them is already complete and another is under construction) which will leave thousands of hectares of ancestral lands and forests under water. These conflicts have shown how difficult it is to implement large-scale projects on Indigenous land without the consent, participation and prior knowledge of the social sectors directly affected.

It is important to bring the gender variable into this debate. Although environmental deterioration affects men and women alike, it is recognized that

⁸ In many instances, Indigenous peoples' rights over their territories are ignored or denied by the laws of modern States, which overlook the common law rights used by Indigenous peoples to regulate the use, occupation and distribution of land.

certain types of environmental damage and contamination affect women disproportionately by depriving them of resources needed for subsistence and thus displacing them to other geographical areas in conditions of poverty and insecurity (Bello, 1998).

Rural women in general, and Indigenous women in particular, are highly specialized in the use of certain natural resources. This knowledge is essential to the conservation of biodiversity. For this reason, the role of women in the sustainable management of natural resources has been deemed a key factor in the circle of rural poverty.

2. Afro-descendants

a) *Population*

As in the case of Indigenous people, any attempt to establish the size of the Afro-descendant population comes up against a number of difficulties, of which two will be mentioned here. Firstly, demographic censuses do not ask about this characteristic in all the countries. Secondly, where the race/colour variable is asked about, the response of the interviewee is conditioned by a number of factors, such as income and education levels, awareness of negritude, the need for "whitening", etc. All this makes it difficult to compare the data of different countries.

Despite these difficulties, an effort has been made to count Afro-descendants. One of the problems with this is that the figures we have for blacks and mulattos in most of the countries' populations are quite old. This causes distortions in the final count because demographic dynamics differ by racial group, i.e., rates of fertility, mortality, etc., differ by ethnic and racial origin.⁹ Even so, table 1 gives an idea, albeit a rough one, of the Afro-descendant population in the different countries of the region.

It can be said, subject to the limitations mentioned, that a very rough estimate of the black and mulatto/mestizo population¹⁰ yields a total of some 150 million

⁹ In Brazil, for example, while infant mortality has declined, only in 1980 did it reach the same rate among the black population as it had among the white population in 1960. As regards adult mortality, in 1950 the life expectancy of the white and black/mestizo populations was 47.5 and 40, respectively, while in 1980 the figures were 66.1 and 59.4. Thus, life expectancy has improved significantly in both groups, but the difference between them has hardly narrowed (Berquó, 1988).

¹⁰ This is not the place to go into the complex subject of what it means to be mulatto or mestizo in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this context, the terms should be understood to refer to people who, when consulted about their racial origin in demographic

TABLE 1

Latin America and the Caribbean: Estimates for the black and mulatto population,^a by country, 1998

Country	Year of %	Black (%)	Mulatto (%)	1998 population	Black+mulatto population
1. Antigua and Barbuda	1970	81.4	8.6	67 000	60 300
2. Netherlands Antilles				213 000	
3. Argentina				36,125 000	^b
4. Bahamas				300 000	
5. Barbados	1980	91.9	2.6	268 000	253 260
6. Belize	1991	6.6	43.7	230 000	115 690
7. Bolivia				7,957 000	^b
8. Brazil	1995	4.9	40.1	166,296 000	74,833 200
9. Chile				14,822 000	^b
10. Colombia	1991	5.0	71.0	40,804 000	31,011 040
11. Costa Rica				3,840 000	^b
12. Cuba	1981	12.0	21.8	11,116 000	3,757 208
13. Dominica	1981	91.2	6.0	71 000	69 012
14. Ecuador				12,175 000	^b
15. El Salvador				6,031 000	^b
16. Grenada	1980	82.2	13.3	93 000	88 815
17. Guadeloupe				443 000	
18. Guatemala				10,802 000	^b
19. Guyana	1980	30.5	11.0	856 000	355 240
20. Haiti	1999	95.0		8,056 000	7,653 200
21. Honduras				6,148 000	^b
22. Jamaica	1970	90.9	5.8	2,539 000	2,455 213
23. Mexico				95,830 000	^b
24. Nicaragua				4,807 000	^b
25. Panama				2,767 000	^b
26. Paraguay				5,223 000	^b
27. Peru				24,801 000	^b
28. Dominican Republic	1991	11.0	73.0	8,232 000	6,914 880
29. St. Kitts and Nevis	1980	94.3	3.3	41 000	40 016
30. Saint Lucia	1980	86.8	9.3	148 000	142 228
31. St. Vincent and the Grenadines	1980	82.0	13.9	115 000	110 285
32. Suriname		15.0 ^c		416 000	62 400
33. Trinidad and Tobago	1980	40.8	16.3	1,284 000	733 164
34. Uruguay				3,289 000	^b
35. Venezuela	1991	10.0	65.0	23,242 000	17,431 500
<i>Total</i>				<i>499,447 000</i>	<i>146,084 651</i>

^a The black and mulatto population percentages were obtained from the United States Bureau of the Census, International (www.census.gov), except for Brazil (www.ibge.gov), Haiti (www.odci.gov) and Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Venezuela (Larousse Moderno, 1991). Population totals were obtained from ECLAC (1999).

^b The census does not ask about (African) racial origin.

^c Price (1995).

Afro-descendants for the region (see table), or about 30% of the total population. Geographically, they are to be found chiefly in Brazil (50%), Colombia (20%) and Venezuela (10%), and in the Caribbean (16%), where they are the majority in several countries.

censuses, give an answer that places them outside the white category. This calculation supposedly does not include Indigenous mestizos.

b) Education

In today's world, education is becoming more and more important for those wishing to obtain better jobs and thence higher incomes. As is well known, education is a good that is distributed unequally in Latin American society, ethnic and racial origin being a factor that reduces people's prospects of entering higher levels of education. The result is ever-rising inequality and exclusion of black people.

In the case of Brazil, black and mulatto children have greater difficulty in entering, remaining in and progressing¹¹ through the educational system and keeping up to the standards set for their age group.¹² They also attend worse-quality schools, the result of all this being that they are more likely to be failed or to fall behind the standards set for their age group than are white students. Other indicators, such as the illiteracy rate¹³ and the proportion of people with 12 years of education or more¹⁴ (UNDP/Institute of Applied Economic Research, 1996), also show white children as being in a better position than black and mulatto ones. Another striking fact: of 50,000 students at the University of São Paulo in 1992, just 2% were black (IACHR, 1997).

Another important issue that arises in relation to education is the need for school texts and curricula to put aside prejudices and stereotypes relating to black people and introduce elements that show Afro culture in a positive light. In short, spaces need to be opened up for cultural pluralism and tolerance, so that existing cultures can be respected and preserved and cultural assimilation processes rejected.

c) *Work and employment*

The poor employment position of Afro-descendants is revealing of racial segregation in the region. A good example is Brazil, the country with the largest black and mulatto population in Latin America. In the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro, about 60% of black and mulatto men carry out manual work in industry, as against 37% of white men. While some 40% of black and mulatto women work as domestic servants, the figure for white women is just 15% (Rangel, 1998).

¹¹ The difficulties that black people have in moving up through the education system increase at the higher levels. While a black boy or girl who has started school has a 15% lower chance of reaching the second stage of basic education than a white boy or girl, a black student who has started secondary education has a 25% lower chance of going on to university than a white student (UNDP/Institute of Applied Economic Research, 1996).

¹² At the age of 14, 35% of white students, 73% of black ones and 65% of mestizo ones are more than two years behind the attainment level set for their age group. Conversely, 28% of white students, as against just 6% of black ones and 6% of mestizo ones, do not fall behind in this way (UNDP/Institute of Applied Economic Research, 1996).

¹³ The figure is 15.1% for white people, 35.2% for black people and 33.6% for mestizos (UNDP/Institute of Applied Economic Research, 1996).

¹⁴ The figure is 11.4% for white people, 1.7% for black people and 2.9% for mestizos (UNDP/Institute of Applied Economic Research, 1996).

Thus, the combination of the gender and race variables appears to determine the particular position occupied by black women in Brazil's society and labour market: this group is positioned in the lower social strata, with lower incomes and a lower return on investments in education (there is a greater concentration of women, mainly black women, in domestic employment).

Race and gender emerge as determining factors in occupational stratification, the structuring of social opportunities and the distribution of material and symbolic rewards. Racism and sexism mean that, in terms of remuneration, women and black people obtain proportionately lower returns from their educational investments than white men do (Hasenbalg and Silva, 1988).

Like Indigenous people, Afro-descendants find it difficult to improve their position in the labour market, chiefly because of structural factors such as their relative lack of schooling or occupational training. Because of these factors, they generally participate in the labour market on a basis of extreme inequity.

d) *Income distribution*

Income distribution in the region is highly unequal, and this is particularly true when ethnic and racial origin is considered. In Brazil, a country whose income distribution is among the world's worst, the incomes of black and mulatto men in 1990 averaged 63% and 68%, respectively, of white men's average income. The same pattern of inequity was seen in the case of black and mulatto women, whose incomes averaged 68% of white women's. This income inequality is partly due to certain characteristics of these social groups. Firstly, there is the regional aspect: the racial composition of the Brazilian population varies by region, with whites predominating in the south and mulattos in the north. Thus, whites are concentrated in the most developed regions and mulattos in regions with lower per capita incomes. Secondly, there is the educational aspect: black people and mulattos have lower levels of schooling than white people. These two characteristics may explain some of the income inequality between black and white people. Differences associated with racial origin persist, however, even when the results are adjusted for both factors. In other words, when people of different races who live in the same region and have the same level of education are compared, the degree of inequality, although smaller, remains significant (UNDP/Institute of Applied Economic Research, 1996).

e) *Political mobilization, participation and representation*

The political mobilization, participation and representation of social groups is undoubtedly a key factor in reducing inequality. Indeed, much of what the black population now has was obtained through political struggle. However, the black population is certainly under-represented in official politics. In the face of this and of what seem to be self-perpetuating inequalities and injustices, there is permanent racial mobilization in some countries, such as the United States and Brazil.

Afro-descendant social movements and racial mobilizations have called into question the role of the State in their countries, pressed for reforms to open up access to full citizenship for all, and struggled for equality and an end to racism. It would seem that national-type mobilization in Latin America and the Caribbean is now seeking to surmount national borders and shape an “Afro-descendant” movement.

f) *Land and territory*

The subject of land and territory among black people has been given less attention than in the case of Indigenous people, and has only taken on importance recently. Here, reference will be made exclusively to the cases of Brazil and Colombia.

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, the constitutions of both countries have made mention for the first time (Brazil in 1988 and Colombia in 1991) to the cultural and agrarian land rights of their black communities. These legislative innovations have had major social repercussions, have given rise to new legal issues at the national level and in academic circles and, lastly, have created facts where only recognition was intended. These innovations, which seem to be a departure from previous approaches, since both countries had ignored the existence and circumstances of Afro-descendants, have given rise in practice to territorial policies influenced by the Indigenous agrarian land right issue (Arruti, 1999).

In Colombia, there was already a significant anthropological literature on the rural black populations of the Pacific coast which were to benefit from the 1991

Constitution. These studies were influenced by the paradigm of Indigenous anthropology, ignoring urban or semi-urban blacks. In Brazil, the first studies to look at rural black communities in terms of ethnicity were almost contemporaneous with the 1988 Constitution (Arruti, 1999).

The Colombian legislation recognizes the territorial rights of a group of communities that can be identified with some socio-geographical and historical precision: the Colombian Pacific. In this case, there is not much doubt about who should benefit from the new agrarian land rights. The Brazilian case is different, since it is not precisely specified which and how many communities are to benefit from the new legislation. The Constitution speaks of the “remanescentes” –the remnants or descendants– of the Maroons. This harks back to a type of historical social formation that supposedly disappeared with slavery, and whose characteristic is the search for invisibility vis-à-vis the State. Not only this, but the more historians research the documents available, the less homogeneous is the idea that emerges from their studies of the Maroons. The anthropologists asked to identify these “remnants” seek to define them by means of self-attribution, turning the issue into a problem of ethnic identity. In other words, the effort to identify the people who would benefit from the new Brazilian legislation has opened up a specialist field of study that is being fought over by anthropologists, sociologists, historians and archaeologists, not to mention governmental and non-governmental agencies (Arruti, 1999).

In Colombia, debates about article 55, relating to the territory to which black communities would be entitled, began as soon as the Constitution had been passed. It was regulated by Law 70 of 1993, which played a part in the mobilization of different Colombian Pacific communities, organized into regional councils and associations. In Brazil, article 68 of the Constitution was only debated in 1995, the third centenary of Zumbi de Palmares, the country’s most important Maroon leader, when bills to regulate it were introduced. Since then, demands for recognition as “remnants” of the quilombos have spread to communities in every state of the country (Arruti, 1999).

III

Conclusions: citizenship and identity, the keys to ending ethnic and racial discrimination in Latin America and the Caribbean

Discrimination and exclusion by ethnicity and race are part of a historical process in the region that, with local and regional variants, is having a great influence on its sociocultural, economic and political processes today. Thus, the “dialectic of denial of the other” (Calderón, Hopenhayn and Ottone, 1993 and Hopenhayn, 1998) is part of a process that has been constructed over a long period through history, culture and society. It is a dynamic process that can be reoriented by the State and public policies towards a situation in which the groups concerned enjoy the basic conditions of equity. Any effort of this kind needs to be inspired by the dynamic of Afro-descendants and Indigenous people themselves, by their opportunities and potential for self-development, by their logic and by their knowledge, which are visible under the social and cultural phenomenon of the “emergence of identities”.

The “emergence” of diversity and identity has been accompanied by the development and universalization of economic, social and cultural rights. With these parameters, there is a visible and legitimate need for Afro-descendants and Indigenous people to have equitable access to a modern citizenship which, in the words of ECLAC, takes account of the particular features and forms of behaviour that define the region’s identity. This identity is based on numerous specific identities that differ widely from one another. Rather than being an obstacle, as the perception has been hitherto, this offers great growth and development opportunities for social cohesion and integration in the continent. What needs to be understood is that ethnic identities and cultural differences have to be appreciated in the light of the multi-ethnic and multicultural character of Latin American societies, which means abandoning the

parameter of denial and homogenization that has characterized the region.

How can integration be approached in the Indigenous and Afro-Latin context? In the first place, it needs to be recalled that for Indigenous people, for instance, traditional integration policies have involved stripping them of their symbolic and material goods, ignoring and/or abolishing their collective rights, and denying their culture. Thus, for Indigenous people, integration has been synonymous with assimilation and cultural disintegration. Only since the introduction of the new perspectives and forms of social integration has a broader concept been arrived at, supplemented by other dimensions and “renewed forms of integration” (Hopenhayn, 1998) grounded in the social and cultural diversity that characterizes all human groups.

We need to turn our attention to differences, and see identities not as threatening separatism or the “Balkanization” of the region, but as a renewed way of understanding human rights, sociocultural processes and the struggle against poverty and marginalization. Ethnic identity and the “challenge of diversity” can be seen as a singular form of “social capital”, and cultural capital as well, that holds out great opportunities not only for Afro-descendants and Indigenous people, but for the region’s society as a whole, and that can even provide a basis for dealing with issues such as competitiveness and the objectives of economic growth. The region is now at a turning point. The problem is deep-rooted, but the region has the instruments, the knowledge and the political, cultural and economic base to confront it successfully in the millennium that is now beginning.

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