

Printing Ideas: Intellectuals and Racial Mobilization in Post-War Brazil (1945-1955)¹

Petrônio Domingues²

Professor at the Universidade Federal de Sergipe (UFS);
pjdomingues@yahoo.com.br

Flávio Gomes³

Professor at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), CNPq scholar and Scientist from our State/FAPERJ; escravo@prolink.com.br

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze the publication *Quilombo* and the expectations of intellectual sectors and integration projects in Brazil immediately after World War II. We argue that this periodical – published by the Black Experimental Theater group (Teatro Experimental do Negro; TEN) between 1948 and 1950 – became the main voice for a democratic political movement with an anti-racist orientation, particularly spearheaded by Black intellectuals with the support of other segments of Brazilian society. This political movement – especially its news outlet – became an ideological hub that sought to forge a new hegemony on the racial discourse of the time (HANCHARD, 2001), but it is also true that it did not articulate one but many voices, multiple discourses and a variety of ideologies. As Bastide has observed (1951:50), several alternative publications represented the uplift of individuals in specific social segments, and it could be said that the creation of *Quilombo* also indicated a desire for inclusion, participation and visibility for Black intellectuals in a given national plan. And it is possible to suggest that certain trajectories and biographies of intellectuals, political

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² PhD in History from the Universidade de São Paulo (USP) and professor at the Universidade Federal de Sergipe (UFS).

³ PhD in History from the Universidade de Campinas (UNICAMP) and a professor at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), CNPq scholar and Scientist from our State/FAPERJ.

institutions and events have assisted with the analysis of narratives on race, integration, citizenship and miscegenation.

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1. A polyphony of voices

In the early 1940s, Abdias do Nascimento led a movement to create a theater group with a view to protesting against the exclusion of people of African descent from the Brazilian stage and their marginal inclusion in minor roles or as grotesque caricatures (Nascimento, 1968; Martins, 1995; Semog & Nascimento, 2006). After introducing the idea, he started organizing preparatory meetings. The first would be held at the Amarelinho Café in Cinelândia, in downtown Rio de Janeiro, including Aguinaldo Camargo, Wilson Tibério, Teodorico dos Santos and José Herbel. The second took place at the Fênix Theater. That is how the Black Experimental Theater (*Teatro Experimental do Negro*; TEN) was born on October 13, 1944.

Due to the lack of plays with dignified portrayals of the situation of Black people, the group decided to stage *The Emperor Jones*, by the distinguished American playwright Eugene O'Neill. It debuted on May 8, 1945, in the city's most important theater, the Teatro Municipal. It was the first in a series of productions through which the TEN managed to stir up Rio's theater scene for almost a decade (Fernández, 1977; Douxami, 2001). Going beyond theatrical productions, the TEN group expanded its activities in the social, political and intellectual spheres of life in the city, which was then the capital of Brazil. In addition to holding several events involving intellectuals and other movements in the struggle to restore democracy, it offered literacy classes and created the *Instituto Nacional do Negro*, a Black studies department run by the sociologist Guerreiro Ramos. Also in 1950, Abdias do Nascimento launched his abortive candidacy for city councilman in Rio de Janeiro, on the Social Democratic Party (PSD) ticket. This was the most important phase for the TEN, when it established the *Museu do Negro* and held beauty contests called the *Rainha das Mulatas* (Queen of the Mulatto Women) and *Boneca de Pixe* (Tar Baby) (Müller, 1988; Motta-Maués, 1997; Oliveira, 2003; Flores, 2007).

The TEN group played a leading role in controversial activities that attracted considerable media attention.⁴ The aim was to raise public awareness of the problems facing Black people. Within this spirit, for example, it organized an art competition in 1955 with the central theme of the "Black Christ". But in the late 1950s, the TEN

⁴ For a memoir of the TEN, see NASCIMENTO (2004).

showed the first signs of crisis and decline, and gradually faded out in the following decade. Any movement that defended Black people's rights was viewed with mistrust. As a result, the TEN was virtually extinguished, and Abdias do Nascimento went into self-imposed exile in the USA (Domingues, 2011).

On December 9, 1948, the TEN launched a publication called *Quilombo*, with the suggestive subtitle of "Black Life, Problems and Aspirations". Printed in tabloid format, the periodical's layout reflected high technical quality for that time, with a combination of a large number of images (photos, drawings, illustrations, etc.) and articles. It called itself an "illustrated bimonthly" publication,⁵ but it was generally published on a monthly basis, with some variations in the periods that elapsed between the first and second and fourth and fifth issues. It was financed by a few TEN members – including Guerreiro Ramos – and white contributors. It had few advertisers and even fewer sales. Given this situation, financial problems soon arose, a factor that probably resulted in *Quilombo's* brief life span. The paper published its agenda in the first to fifth issues, presenting a number of demands linked to "working for the uplift of Black Brazilians in all sectors: social, cultural, educational, political, economic and artistic"⁶. In addition to publishing a mix of special sections, brief news items and longer features, *Quilombo* included permanent columns. It also adopted the practice of translating articles on the broader world of the arts, culture, politics, social issues and ideology of "men of color". Its main translation is worthy of note: the essay "Black Orpheus" by the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre, and one of the analytical milestones of the French *negritude* movement.⁷ It was in this essay – originally the preface to an anthology organized by Léopold Senghor in 1948 – that Sartre gave the theory of *negritude* the status of a philosophy with revolutionary political dimensions; a weapon in the struggle against colonial domination (Sartre, 1968).

An analysis of all issues of *Quilombo* shows that the publication adopted a policy of forming a front of alliances with white "democrats". The advertising campaign launched to increase subscriptions did not omit the fact that "Blacks, mulattoes and white democrats" should collaborate "in the work to ensure the social uplift of Brazilians of color".⁸ In the first year of the anniversary of the death of Brazilian industrialist Roberto Simonsen, *Quilombo* published a notice "associating itself with those who paid

⁵ *Quilombo*, June 1949, p. 9.

⁶ *Quilombo*, December 1948, p. 3.

⁷ *Quilombo*, January 1950, p. 7.

⁸ *Quilombo*, March/April 1950, p. 3.

tribute to the memory of that great man on that date”. Finally, it states that “it is a pleasure to observe that Roberto Simonsen was not just a major name in industry and the productive classes but an important Brazilian figure due to his unmistakable spiritual and intellectual nobility and his correct, humane and patriotic view of our social problems”.⁹ Why would a publication that emerged from the Black social movement pay tribute to a white business leader who never worked on behalf of Afro-Brazilians? Probably because he was concerned with “our national problems”. And since the “Black problem” was viewed as part of the national problem, he may have been an ally of the Blacks, albeit indirectly.

However, this explanation is insufficient. There are indications that suggest that we consider how *Quilombo* effectively advocated a racial policy of alliance with white “democrats” and some sectors of civil society. For example, through an interview, it permitted business leader Eurico de Oliveira to campaign for a seat in Congress. “Of all the whites who have worked the hardest for the causes of men of color in Brazil,” the paper declared, “we can underscore the name of Eurico Oliveira”.¹⁰ Indeed, the most iconic example of this collaborative stance can be seen in the treatment given to Jael de Oliveira Lima, one of the leading construction magnates in the city of Rio de Janeiro at the time. In several reports, this businessman is described as an “aristocrat of the heart,”¹¹ and his name is revered. The newspaper even backed his candidacy for Brazil’s Federal Congress. A white man’s candidacy was publicized alongside those of Black candidates.¹² Paulo Duarte, editor-in-chief of *O Estado de São Paulo*, was also hailed as a “white man with a Black soul”.¹³ In short, to bolster the “work of social uplift of Brazilians of color,” it was necessary to allude deferentially to presumable white allies, both in the political and intellectual spheres. This stance was repeated when announcing the passing of anthropologist Artur Ramos: “with the death of Artur Ramos,” the obituary observed, “Black Brazilians have lost one of their best friends and most lucid advocates”.¹⁴

In addition to signaling interracial collaboration, the policy of forming a coalition with whites had another aim: ridding the publication of any possible negative stigma. “Among us,” wrote Guerreiro Ramos, “any Black movement of an aggressive or

⁹ *Quilombo*, June 1949, p. 4.

¹⁰ *Quilombo*, February 1950, p. 5.

¹¹ *Quilombo*, February 1950, p. 12.

¹² *Quilombo*, June/July 1950, p. 5.

¹³ *Quilombo*, July 1949, p. 3.

¹⁴ *Quilombo*, January 1950, p. 3.

isolationist nature will sorely wound national tradition and consequently become merely a matter for the police”. Therefore, investing in the formation of a rainbow crusade was also a tactic that *Quilombo* used to ensure that its public image was not associated with intolerance or sectarianism. Some white collaborators, such as Péricles Leal, published articles in the newspaper on many occasions. In fact, all issues of that publication made room for (and gave a “voice” to) white people.

The ideal of racial democracy pervaded several issues of *Quilombo*. Overall, it is likely that the publication condoned it while negotiating within the sphere of that ideal. The discourse of the writers and columnists, both Black and white, was ambivalent. While recognizing the existence of “color prejudice,” they believed that they lived in a racially democratic (or fraternal) country, and the task of the Black race was to make the most of that situation. “Brazil should become a world leader in the politics of racial democracy,” observed Ramos, “because it is the only country on the planet that offers a satisfactory solution to the race problem. With respect to men of color, Brazilian society offers them virtually all freedoms. And if there is a problem for men of color in our country, it eminently consists of mobilizing them to use those freedoms through culture and education”.¹⁵

The first contributor to publish this kind of discourse in *Quilombo* was Gilberto Freyre, in his first “Racial Democracy” column in 1948. “It is no exaggeration to say,” he wrote, “that in Brazil we have been establishing an ethnic democracy against which there prevailed until today sporadic or lyrical aryanisms, but sometimes bloody melanisms that have occasionally manifested themselves among us”.¹⁶ Similarly, faith in the supposed racial brotherhood in this country permeated a signed editorial by Abdias do Nascimento: “Only with a great and arduous collective effort, governed by the noble spirit of racial brotherhood that guided our historical formation, can we can do the work of uplift for Black people”.¹⁷

The ideological discourse of the defense of racial mixture was not just dominated by the common sense of the time (Alberto, 2011). The newspaper was also an agency that propagated and negotiated within the sphere of that discourse. When he wrote an article entitled “Miscegenation in Brazil,” Artur Ramos refuted scientific theories that touted the racial inferiority or pathological degeneration of the mestizo. Based on bio-

¹⁵ *Quilombo*, June/July 1950, p. 11.

¹⁶ *Quilombo*, January, December 1948, p. 8.

¹⁷ *Quilombo*, January, March/April 1950, p. 1. With regard to how Abdias do Nascimento professed and negotiated with the discourse of racial democracy in the 1940s, see GUIMARÃES and MACEDO (2008).

logical premises, he argued that the product of “racial mixture” was beneficial to the nation’s ethnic makeup: “One should not forget, however, that the general basis of the population is made up of the initial mixture, both physical and cultural, of the Portuguese element with the Indians and Blacks, based on which they would graft new mixtures of recent elements of European extraction”.¹⁸

In an article originally published in the newspaper *Folha do Rio* on May 6, 1950, Abdias do Nascimento expounded on the “Black problem”. At one point, he boasted that “in our country we all have the unmistakable hallmark of this tasty racial melting pot races and Black people have no interest in disturbing the natural progress of this mixture of blood, culture, religion and civilization”.¹⁹ To demonstrate the political strength of African Brazilians, on another occasion Nascimento pondered in a front-page editorial: “We are almost twenty million mixed-race Brazilians strongly characterized by our African ancestry”.²⁰ Thus, all African Brazilians were, above all, mestizo.

It is difficult to gauge the reach that *Quilombo* had in that context, or to know how it was received within the Black community. In any event, we have found some indications in its pages, such as the “Letters” column, a section devoted to readers’ critiques, suggestions and comments. It can be used to determine whether *Quilombo* was approved by the Black community, awakening their racial pride. Addressed in care of Abdias do Nascimento, a letter from Durvalino Alves da Silva, of Nova Aliança, São Paulo, dated May 31, 1949, reads: “Dear Sir. I have read the issues of our newspaper *Quilombo - vida, problema e aspirações*. I have read it with love and affection because it deals exclusively with the social education of our brothers of color”.²¹

Internationally there is also evidence we can use to gauge the acceptance of the paper, whose issues came to be read in the United States and parts of Europe and Africa. There is a letter by Thomé Agostinho das Neves - a lawyer and journalist - to Abdias do Nascimento, written in Luanda, Angola, which reads: “Friendly hands made the newspaper QUILOMBO, which circulates in Brazil, come before my eyes.... This very day I read issues one through four, which told me what I wanted to know about the social, cultural and artistic life of Black people in Brazil”.²² The foreign country with which

¹⁸ *Quilombo*, May 1949, p. 8.

¹⁹ *Quilombo*, May 1950, p. 5.

²⁰ *Quilombo*, February 1950, p. 1.

²¹ *Quilombo*, July 1949, p. 2.

²² *Quilombo*, January 1950, p. 4.

Quilombo had the greatest interaction was undoubtedly the United States.²³ George S. Schuyler began to praise it in articles published in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, one of the leading Black newspapers on the Eastern Seaboard. This leading African American journalist described *Quilombo* as “the best periodical” of its kind in Brazil and suggested that the entire African American community should read it.²⁴ *Quilombo* was distributed to a few Black institutions and public libraries in the USA. A copy of the first issue was sent to the New York Public Library, and its director, Jean Blackwell, acknowledged it with a letter to Nascimento: “Thank you for sending the first copy of ‘Quilombo.’ We are sure that our readers will be as interested as we are in learning about the problems and aspirations of our brothers in South America”.²⁵ In the European world, the most important contact was established with *Présence Africaine* magazine – founded by Alioune Diop in Paris and Dakar in December 1947 – the main reference for the leaders of the French Negritude movement. After receiving the first issue of *Quilombo*, the editor-in-chief of *Présence Africaine*, J. Schwder-Oriol, sent a letter to the African Brazilian newspaper: “Mr. Nascimento. The editors of *Présence Africaine* magazine would be very honored to count you among their permanent contributors. Please accept our most distinguished greetings”.²⁶

Through its activities, the TEN was able to unfurl banners, make complaints, raise questions and propose the demands of the Black population.²⁷ It is worth remembering the controversy in the Rio and São Paulo press on the discrimination suffered by African American women like Irene Digs, Katherine Dunham and Marian Anderson between 1947 and 1950.²⁸ Moreover, the TEN guided the debate on Brazilian racism in the press and on the national agenda (Fernández, 1977; Oliveira, 2003).

2. Racial atmosphere and programs: between clarity and invisibility

²³ *Quilombo*, December 1948, p. 5.

²⁴ *Quilombo*, January 1950, p. 4

²⁵ *Quilombo*, May 1949, p. 3.

²⁶ See *Quilombo*. March/April, 1950, p. 4. Regarding the transnational dimensions of Black and intellectual organizations in 20th-century Brazil, see also PEREIRA (2013).

²⁷ See the controversy, for example, regarding the “Black Christ Competition,” *Jornal do Brasil*, 26/06/1955.

²⁸ *Jornal Diretrizes*, 10/02/1947 and *Correio Paulistano*, 16/07/1950.

Many analyses of postwar Black mobilization have focused on the TEN to the detriment of other institutions and discourses of the time. Worse still, studies have concentrated on its main leader – Abdias do Nascimento – and the artistic discourse of theatrical representation, the production of plays and the impacts of these activities. We still know little about how the TEN's intellectual undertaking was received by the Black community, and even less about whether it was capitalized on, and by which sectors, within the debate on re-democratization during the postwar period. The atmosphere of extensive debate and the role of its protagonists were relegated to the narratives of the theater movement and to the expectations of leaders and the criticism that arose. Little effort has been made to address the dialogues (and silences) that mobilized a significant generation of intellectuals in Brazil in the 40s and 50s. Debates took place involving a varied range of leading figures in Brazilian social thought, including intellectuals, academics and political activists (Motta-Maués, 1988).

The context was no less complex. Brazilian society and its direction emerged as the subject of intense debate: the end of World War II, the end of the Vargas dictatorship, presidential elections, the Constituent Assembly, freedom for political parties, public participation, mass union movements, and so forth. Linked to this, there was a resurgence of studies of Blacks in Brazil through the UNESCO program. Neither before nor afterwards, but at the same time and connected to all this, the TEN emerged, along with the mobilization of several Black organizations and a new period of political freedom. The debate on race in Brazil was a daily topic in the press and the Constituent Assembly, and subsequently took the form of the Afonso Arinos Law (Alberto, 2011:190-95; Hanchard, 2001:129-32).

Part of the group of intellectuals who organized the TEN and then founded the newspaper *Quilombo* was involved in organizing major events that often appear to have been completely overlooked in the interpretations of the antiracist mobilization of the time. Between 1945 and 1955, they organized and held the *Convenção Nacional do Negro* (Black National Convention, São Paulo, 1945), the *Convenção Política do Negro Brasileiro* (Black Brazilian Caucus, Rio de Janeiro, 1945), the *Conferência Nacional do Negro* (National Black Conference, Rio de Janeiro, 1949), the *I Congresso do Negro Brasileiro* (First Congress of Black Brazilians, Rio de Janeiro, 1950) and the *Semana de Estudos sobre o Negro* (Black Studies Week, Rio de Janeiro, 1955). These events mobilized several prominent figures and agendas that were part of the political debate of the time (Nascimento, 1968).

In São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, respectively, the *Convenção Nacional do Negro* and the *Convenção Política do Negro Brasileiro* in late 1945 were held amid a nationwide electoral climate in the run-up to the presidential elections. Regarding the mobilization of Black voters, the newspaper *O Globo* observed: “the movement that is mobilizing Black Brazilians is developing in the face of problems created by the new political era the country is experiencing, and as a consequence of the defeat of the Nazi and Japanese fascist armies”.²⁹ We have been unable to discover the names of the people who participated in that convention,³⁰ or find information about the debates, controversies and even preparations, including protagonists, invitations, programs and alliances.³¹ All we have is a report on its final document, especially produced to be presented to the various presidential candidates. This document can be interpreted as an agenda of the racial issues of the time; a manifesto addressed to “Black countrymen”. At a time when the nation was discussing “re-democratization,” Black intellectuals were presenting their own “demands,” urging all Black people to engage in “the work of unification and coordination” in times of anti-racist struggle. In the document, along with the force of the word “unification” we find the idea of autonomy, both in actions and in ideas. The manifesto reads: “we no longer need to consult anyone to conclude that our rights are legitimate”. The Black intellectuals pointed toward autonomous and effective participation in their own terms and logic, regarding the re-democratization and modernization of Brazilian society. Anticipating possible attacks and political barbs, they said they did not want to be “protected or sponsored by anyone”. It would be an explicit critical expression regarding partisan and ideological political practices as well as the role of education and the direction of the new field of African Brazilian studies (NASCIMENTO, 1968:37-41 & 59-61).

Moreover, there were indications regarding the convening of the Constituent Assembly the following year. In addition to the racial question, any debate on any issue was highly politicized, sure to generate controversy. This can be verified in a review of

²⁹ *O Globo*, 27/09/1945. See also the controversies regarding Black organizations in IPEAFRO, BR ABD TEN, APPN 14.

³⁰ We know that a harsh critique by José Correia Leite was published in *Folha da Noite*, 7/12/1945, regarding the lack of representation among the organizers, arguing that he was writing as the “Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Association of Brazilian Blacks”. See: IPEAFRO, APPN 11.

³¹ For repercussions in the press, see: *Diário da Noite*, 12/11/1945; *Jornal de São Paulo*, 13/11/1945; *Correio Paulistano*, 13/11/1945; *A Gazeta*, 13/11/1945 and *O Radical*, 17/11/1945. Proposals were also presented through the Afro-Brazilian Cultural Center and the Afro-Brazilian Democratic Union. See: IPEAFRO, Fundo Abdias do Nascimento, Seção TEN, Série Atuação Política, Dossiê: Convenção Nacional do Negro Brasileiro, BR ABDTEN: APCN nos. 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13 and 17.

news reports from that period. Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo newspapers focused on all issues that could be potentially controversial. Everything was marked by the tone of the political debates. Explicit or indirect accusations of communism, fascism and populism arose. The word “democracy” had to be linked to “nationalism”. The very intellectuals who signed the final manifesto of the *Convenção Nacional do Negro Brasileiro* called themselves the “Group of Pioneers,” urging all Blacks, no matter what their “political beliefs,” to reaffirm the importance of “national consciousness”. Let us take a look at the six demands listed in the Convention’s final document. The first was that the Constitution should clearly state the “ethnic origins of the Brazilian people”. They should be declared to be “the three basic races: indigenous, Black and white”. The second and third demands mention the establishment of a legal apparatus and even specific criminal legislation regarding “color and racial prejudice,” which was considered a “crime against the fatherland,” applied differently to individuals and corporations. Public and private companies and associations should be held criminally liable for racist acts. The fourth demand was granting admission and government scholarships to all “Black Brazilians” for secondary school and higher education. This would continue until “education in this country is free at all levels”. The fifth demand, interestingly, does not mention “race” or “color”. It has to do with tax exemptions for anyone wishing to “establish any commercial, industrial or agricultural enterprise with capital not exceeding” 20,000 cruzeiros, in the currency of that time. The sixth and final demand had a more general character. It addressed the urgent need to adopt government measures to “increase the economic, social and cultural levels of the Brazilian people. “ Once again, it did not mention “race” or “color”. More than indicating silence, contradictions or ethnic ambiguity, there was symbolic meaning in viewing the racial issue in Brazil as a national problem. It incorporated the ideas of *inclusion* and *integration* (Nascimento, 1968:37-39).

The final part of this document indicates the importance of finding a “remedy” for the “evils” that Blacks suffered in Brazil in terms of social injustice. When evaluating the performance of that convention In 1968 more than 20 years later, Nascimento would emphasize that one of the basic concepts underlying the TEN and its activities in that context was: “teaching whites that Blacks did not want isolated and patronizing help as a special favor”. Its framers wanted and therefore demanded “high status in society, in the form of collective opportunity for all, a people with irrevocable historical rights”. Several questions followed this Black mobilization in 1945. The National Con-

stituent Assembly 1946 was presented with “discrimination as a misdemeanor” for inclusion in its agenda. The press covered the question raised by then-Senator Hamilton Nogueira, emphasizing the controversy. The subject of racism and the drafting of the Brazilian Constitution made the front pages. In late 1945, the newspaper *Diário da Noite* published a large headline with the following title and subtitle: “Blacks throughout Brazil launch struggle against color prejudice” – “Our campaign is not about hate or resentment”. Various sectors of society, including trade unions and political parties, took a stance on the issue. In March of the following year, that same newspaper would once again make it front-page news: “Blacks and whites in the debates of the Constituent National Assembly - Senator Hamilton Nogueira focuses on the heated racial issue, pointing out biases and constraints that must be purged from the new constitution” (Nascimento, 1968:23). In late 1948, the Brazilian Social Crusade and Black Cultural movement organized conferences in São Paulo under the leadership of José da Silva Oliveira.³²

The *Conferência Nacional do Negro* was held in early in 1949. This was yet another initiative sponsored by the TEN’s leadership. Its organizers once again included Guerreiro Ramos, and Edson Carneiro and Abdias do Nascimento, undoubtedly the foremost Black intellectuals in Rio de Janeiro. The aim of this event was to prepare for the *I Congresso do Negro Brasileiro* (the First Congress of Brazilian Blacks) the following year. An important strategy was the attempt to organize the various regional and national Black organizations.³³ The age-old dilemma of the possibility of joint action, representation and centralization arose. The conference in Rio de Janeiro also included a representative of the United Nations. Several white and foreign intellectuals were present, including Artur Ramos himself, in one of his last public appearances before he went to Paris and died there. The conference’s final document called for the organization of the *I Congresso do Negro Brasileiro*. It emphasized the expectations of Black intellectuals regarding the linkage of Black studies of the time in Brazil with the political and social demands of the Black community. It emphasized: “The *Conferência Nacional do Negro* invites writers, historians, anthropologists, folklorists, musicians, sociologists and intellectuals in general to honor this Congress with their cooperation, and seeks the cooperation of Blacks and mulattos, men of the people, so that the Con-

³² IPEAFRO, BR ABD TEN, APNNN 1.

³³ See the repercussions in *Diário de Notícias*, 8/05 e 14/05/1949; *A Manhã*, 8/05/1949 e *Diário da Noite*, 10/05/1949 and *O Mundo*, 11/05/1949; see also IPEAFRO, BR ABD TEN: APNN, nos. 1, 3, 5, 7, 10 and APNB/168, nos. 1 and 2.

gress may be representative of the aspirations and overall tendencies of the population of color”. The agenda of this first congress was extensive, bringing together various areas: the History, Social Life, Religious Survivals, Folkloric Survivals, Language and Aesthetics of Black Brazilians (Nascimento, 1968:61-2). It also attempted to reassert the role of Black people themselves in establishing the direction of the debate about race, including the formulation of an intellectual identity for the field of study that was being formed. We can gather how some intellectuals wanted to participate and change the course of the debate about race. At that time they already knew – as Nascimento himself would explain – about UNESCO’s interest in conducting extensive research on race relations in Brazil. Some Black intellectuals were trying to organize a debate that included Black studies and the political perspective of discussing racism and citizenship in Brazil. We must not underestimate the importance of these debates, as well as other agendas in that context. There were other Black associations in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Gerais and Porto Alegre, as well as movements trying to organize associations of slum dwellers, domestics, etc. (Semog & Nascimento, 2006:149-157).

During the I Congresso do Negro Brasileiro – held from August 26 to September 4, 1950 – the tensions between various intellectual sectors exploded.³⁴ Subsequently the main controversy would arise between Ramos and Costa Pinto, and there were even accusations of misplaced documents, minutes and dissertations presented at Congress. Years later, one aspect of these controversies made the city’s newspapers due to the publication of Costa Pinto’s study *O Negro no Rio de Janeiro* (Blacks in Rio de Janeiro) in 1953, which would be part of his report on the research conducted for the UNESCO Project.³⁵ Before his book was released, Costa Pinto in late 1952 published “a preliminary report” on his research for UNESCO in *Cultura* magazine, a publication of the Documentation Service of the Ministry of Education and Health (Pinto, 1952). In that article, he summed up his view of the analyses in which Brazil was a “striking example” of a society in which there were “survivals of the past” mixed and merged with the “progress,” and the field of race relations was a perfect observation post for analyzing “the coexistence of these two worlds,” which mutually marginalize and neutralize each other: the “dead past” and “barren prospects” (Pinto, 1952: 87).

Costa Pinto – a white academic and intellectual – participated in the First Congress in 1950, and even chaired some of the sessions. The informants for his study in-

³⁴ *A República*, 11/06/1950; *Diário de Notícias*, 16/07/1950 and *O Jornal*, 22/07/1950.

³⁵ *O Jornal*, 17/01/1954.

cluded none other than the Black activist and communist Edison Carneiro. Incidentally, the same Congress had polemicized (alongside other Black intellectuals like Guerreiro Ramos and the Edison Carneiro, just to name the most prominent) about the wording of the final document and its “racialized” aspect. In short, Costa Pinto was a privileged spectator and participant in that atmosphere of racial debate in the 40s and 50s, as well as in the TEN itself and the publication all issues of *Quilombo*. Costa Pinto’s analyses of Black organizations partly evoke the stance that those Black intellectuals criticized in their own events, as well as the movement of collaboration which attracted “white democrats”. While Black intellectuals sought representation, dialogue and collaboration for joint studies, debates and expressions of the Black community’s grievances, Costa Pinto’s “scientific” analysis would address the associative movements formed by segments of the Black population, classifying them as “traditional associations” and “new kinds of associations”. According to him, “the associations of men of color in Rio de Janeiro should be regarded sociologically as raising a more or less clear awareness, more or less distorted, of the failure to resolve of problems related to their material interests, status, values, aspirations and prospects”. His analysis of these associations was based on his own observations, interviews and information collected and passed on by Edison Carneiro. Among the “traditional associations,” Costa Pinto lists the religious entities – Catholic confraternities and *macumbas* – and recreational organizations – samba schools and dance halls. Detailing their functions and public participation in those associations, he stresses that they represented “traditional relations between Blacks and whites,” and that in many ways they represented an “African contribution to aesthetics, music, choreography, myths and legends, in short, Brazilian folk culture”. As for the “new kinds of associations” – he particularly stressed the TEN – these were “sociologically new” entities. According to Costa Pinto, a “new Black,” “non-slave,” “un-African,” “non-rural worker” and “not ignorant” would emerge, “a Brazilian Black, free, proletarian, middle class or intellectual, and urban”. However, even if this “new Black” “did not accept the negative labels and clichés about him, his objective situation and the behaviors expected of him,” he would express himself in a manner that was “almost entirely in a still larval, disjointed, formless, and also, not unfrequently, highly sophisticated and even supposedly scientific (Pinto, 1953:258).

Costa Pinto’s scientific conclusions belittled “the new kinds of associations” and their ideological perspective. For example, he criticized the idea of *negritude*, which for him was a “misguided and racist view” that he “ultimately diagnosed as major and dan-

gerous stereotype of a group of Black intellectuals regarding the Blacks”. In Costa Pinto’s assessment, there was “an explicit and systematic formulation” by both Black intellectuals and whites who “produce variations on the theme”. It was unclear whether “negritude” was “sensed” and/or “thought”. The idea of “negritude” represented nothing more than an “ideological byproduct of the social situation of a small Black elite”. The “rationalization of its problem” by “that vanguard clique” was not representative. This ideology was just “a very distinct brand of temperament, preferences, styles, variations in personal social status and mindset of the Black intellectuals from whose heads this idea has sprung”. His judgment was that negritude was “a nascent ideology that is in its larval, indefinite stage, somewhat shapeless, much more sensed than thought” (Pinto, 1953:292).

3. A broad democratic front

The perceptions and expectations that emerged in the post-war era, whether in *Quilombo* or in the events of the Convention, Conference and Congress organized by the TEN and a group of Black intellectuals, need to be revisited. As an outlet for information and news, *Quilombo* would take on a very specific political-ideological character. It became known for its significant number of distinguished contributors. In its pages – including signed columns and articles – it would feature a considerable range of activists, journalists, artists, politicians, scientists and intellectuals. Important figures – Black and white – who had achieved national prestige. Some even had an international reputation, such as Gilberto Freyre, Francisco de Assis Barbosa, Murilo Mendes, Renato de Almeida and Carlos Drummond de Andrade, among others. For a specific and informative media outlet for “people of color,” this was a major breakthrough. *Quilombo* was the voice of a broad, democratic and anti-racist front headed by Blacks and backed by white allies. They all defended the construction of a new racial hegemony for Brazil, although there was no consensus on the best way to achieve that ideal. Therefore, it is plausible to infer that the newspaper made room for a polyphony of Black (and white) voices.³⁶ In its pages we find not just one but several views on the

³⁶ See criticism of *Quilombo* and the TEN in the *Tribuna da Imprensa*, 14/01/1950 and *Correio da Manhã*, 09/07/1950.

Black problem, various types of rhetoric about identity, multiple agencies, ambivalent positions, in short, a plurality of discourses, ideas and proposals.³⁷

In these political and scientific events, linking academic work and political debates may have been more strategic than contradictory. The Black activists themselves were the main informants for some of the studies of that time. Artur Ramos obtained and incorporated information on São Paulo's "Black press," Florestan Fernandes met with important São Paulo leaders, including Correia Leite and Francisco Lucrecio, and Costa Pinto based his reflections on Edison Carneiro's fieldwork. In short, Black and white intellectuals were mutually seductive and engaged in dialogue. The crux of the matter is to think about how this historical process was "crystallized" in the available narratives. The debates were in place. They could appear invisible or even silent, but they were in place. Harmonies, negotiations, conflicts, and convergences or differences between ideas, debates and dialogues set the tone. Various issues surrounded the debate about race relations in Brazil and the roles of intellectuals and Black organizations.

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³⁷ For an interesting debate on the memory of Black mobilization and its meanings, see BAIROS (1996) and HANCHARD (1997).

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