



Antiracism in BRAZIL

The project “Latin American Anti-racism in a ‘Post-racial’ Age” (2017-18) conducted research on antiracist practices and discourses in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico.

In these countries, anti-racism confronts the ideology that historical mixture between people of European, African and Native American ancestry produced mestizo (mixed-race) nations in which racism was a minor problem, which is steadily becoming less important.

More recently multiculturalism has given greater recognition to ethnic minorities, without always confronting the problems of racism and racial inequality.

What is racism?


It is an ideology and a practice that justifies and produces relationships of oppression and inequality between groups, based on the perception of physical differences (skin colour, shape of the hair, body and face) and cultural differences (languages, traditions, clothing, justice systems, among others). Inequalities can be in terms of access to privileges, benefits, value, power and security.

What is anti-racism?

Anti-racism refers to practices and discourses that confront, erode, change and/or eradicate the relations of inequality and oppression caused by racism. These actions are almost always linked to other struggles (for cultural recognition, human rights, gender equality, land rights, and greater social equality).

Racism in Brazil

In Brazil, Black people have openly challenged racism for a long time. For example, Black newspapers in the 1930s denounced racial prejudice and racial inequality. Despite this, during much of the twentieth century, political elites promoted the image of Brazil as a “racial democracy”, asserting that social inequality was not due to racism because “everyone in Brazil is mixed-race”.



For decades, this ideology was challenged by Black and Indigenous social movements and, in 1995, president Cardoso publicly recognised that equal rights did not exist for Black and Indigenous people.

Nowadays, civil society and the government recognise as “Black” everyone who identifies as preto (black) or pardo (brown) in the census, which since 2010 has been more than **50%** of the population.



Under **1%** of people identify as indigenous and these approximately 1 million individuals comprise over **250** ethnic groups.

Census and survey data clearly show that:

+ inequality disproportionately affects Black and Indigenous peoples.

+ that racial discrimination is a significant cause.

← **Everyday racism and stigmatization in Brazil**

Racism, as a form of stigmatization that denigrates, humiliates, and undermines the dignity of people because of their perceived physical and/or cultural traits, is evident in daily aggressions, insults, and jokes. This type of racism is experienced in:

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Public places (public transport, streets, hairdressing salons, shops, nightclubs).

Working spaces (social interactions between workers, supervisors and customers).

Educational contexts (humiliation, bullying, and belittling among students, inadequate attention from teachers).

Legal and health institutions (people being ignored, underestimated or insulted; receiving poor service).

Media: denigrating and limiting stereotypes in TV and radio programmes, magazines, and advertising, and social media.

Structural racism in Brazil >>

Structural racism refers to the historical inequalities that make it difficult for racialized people to access opportunities and/or resources (health, work, justice, land, food, capital, etc.).

Infant mortality

Census data show infant mortality rates for people:



are **1.5** times higher than for the rest of the population.

Ministry of Health data show infant mortality rates for:



are **3** times higher than the national average.

Education

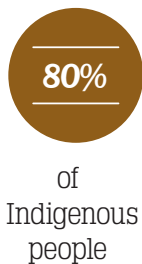
» Literacy rates are **66%** for Indigenous and **83%** for non-Indigenous youngsters (aged 5-15)

White people enter university twice as much as Black people

The illiteracy rate (for over 15s) for Black people is **more than double that for white people.**

Income

Have incomes less than one minimum salary, nearly:



compared to:



White people form a **quarter** and Black people **three-quarters** of the poorest tenth of the population

Out of every 100 people murdered in Brazil, **76** were Black.

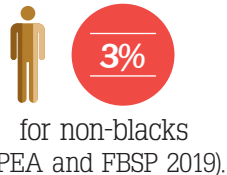


Between **2007** and **2017**, the homicide rate for:

Black people grew by

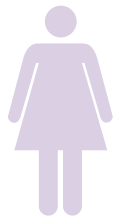


compared to



Young Black men are **147%** more likely to die from homicide than young non-Black people

Black maternal mortality rates are **41%** higher than for white mothers.



← What did we learn?

Our research gave us evidence that there are different anti-racist strategies in Brazil. Many actions are explicitly anti-racist or anti-discriminatory, while others do not mention racism in explicit manner.

Actions

Judicial

Laws and instruments to prevent racial discrimination and correct racial inequalities. »

The 1988 constitution and the 2010 Statute of Racial Equality prohibit racial discrimination. Brazil's 2012 Social Quotas Law has the most comprehensive affirmative action legislation in Latin America, with quotas for Black and Indigenous people in higher education and some areas of federal employment, and special health programmes.

Educational

Black and Indigenous teachers campaign for the proper implementation of laws requiring Black and Indigenous history and culture to be taught in schools.

Territorial

Black and Indigenous rural communities mobilise to demand the land rights to which they are entitled by law, but which are often threatened in practice.

Security

Black people in cities campaign for the “right to life” and protest against the alarmingly rates of police violence against them. Indigenous people in rural areas also fight police and rancher violence.

Challenges for anti-racism in Brazil

Despite the official acknowledgement of racism in Brazil, the power of the ideology of mixture still produces the following effects:

- ❶ Racism is often minimized. The moral and psychological position of those who denounce racism is undermined, by accusing them of having an inferiority complex and being over-sensitive, or of exaggerating the problem.
- ❷ The fight against racism is considered as a distraction from class and gender struggles.
- ❸ It is assumed that Indigenous people suffer less racism than Black populations.
- ❹ White and mestizo people are reluctant to recognize the benefits that racism guarantees them.

These challenges restrict the impacts of affirmative actions, territorial restitution processes, and laws and decrees that guarantee the rights and reparations of Black and Indigenous populations.

Proposals and Pathways

- ❶ Integrate the anti-racist strategies of Indigenous and Black peoples.
- ❷ Expand further affirmative actions, backed by sustainable economic funding.
- ❸ Generate sustainable anti-racist media campaigns integrated with anti-sexist proposals.
- ❹ Make visible and mobilize the antiracist dimensions of territorial struggles.
- ❺ Support the proper implementation of anti-racist pedagogies that also consider gender differences.
- ❻ Raise awareness among white and mestizo people about their role in the reproduction of racism.
- ❼ Promote the effective implementation of anti-racist laws and decrees.

References

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