Consciousness, Literature and the Arts

Volume 17 Number 1, April 2016

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Race consciousness, Diaspora, and Baianidade: Observations from an Epic Global Party

by

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Abstract

Observed here are expressions of race consciousness in the public presence of performance groups known as Afro Blocos. I offer a description of Afro Blocos, informed by 20th century African diasporic history and embedded in a particularly Brazilian political context. The performative nature of the use of public space by these groups also suggests a complex Africanized regional identity generated by both growing race and class consciousness among group members and the growing demand for such representation by the tourist industry. Between the two factors of consciousness and industry participation there is evidence of a social and political compromise, suggestive of the consumptive nature of modern capitalism. Other dimensions of this compromise resonate with W.E.B. DuBois' theory of double consciousness across the Americas and Europe.

Introduction

For a sociologist with my personal and academic background, the term consciousness calls to mind several particular concepts. First, I am inclined to investigate racial consciousness, a set of awareness and interactions given an existing racial hierarchy. Parallel to this is the Marxist concept of class consciousness, knowledge and action toward collective interests given an economically based social structure. For good measure, it is important to think about false consciousness, which in contemporary society amounts to delusions of higher status related to or spurred by aesthetic cultural practices that obviate or at least mollify class differences. Finally, I am reminded of double consciousness, a sense of twoness in the collective hearts and minds of oppressed peoples who are able to see society through the perspectives of their oppressors.

To explore these concepts I draw on some exploratory research I have done for a course I developed on the sociology of carnival. For the course, carnival is defined loosely and includes seasonal celebrations all over the world and any time of the year. For example, a student is currently investigating Mashramani, which occurs in Guyana on the anniversary of its independence in late February. A panel of "burners" will present on their annual dedication to the annual summer Burning Man festival in Nevada's Black Rock desert. I explore the social and structural elements of the carnivalesque, including moral flexibility and the performative nature of mass celebration. The inspiration for the course and my research, however, is the pre-lenten celebration based on the Catholic calendar.

The research includes two annual observations of preparation and performance by carnival groups. My role was participant observer; I performed as a drummer, which required attending rehearsals, attending meetings, performing in demonstrations and parades, and living with some of the other performers. The method of research was observation, including informal interviews, visits to organizational headquarters and schools, and analysis of publicly available material. Much of the material was visual, e.g., fabric, props, photographs and videos presented by peers or organizations, including national and local tourism bureaus. The unit of observation is the performance group called a bloco, similar to samba schools or marching bands. I was embedded in one of these groups, and in that role I observed a few other groups in the context of carnival and stage productions.

Setting: Salvador da Bahia, Brazil

The setting for my observations is Salvador da Bahia, a large city of approximately 2,902,927 people in the northeastern state of Bahia, home to a large portion of the descendants of enslaved Africans in Brazil. The nation of Brazil is approximately 47.7% White[1], 43.1% "Brown"/"Pardo", 7.6% Black/"Preto," 1.1% Asian and .4% Indigenous. The state of Bahia is 20.9% White, 62.9% Brown, 15.7% Black and .6% Asian or Amerindian. As indicated in

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[1] As a writing convention I choose to capitalize the terms for racial and ethnic categories, as these terms represent meaningful social categories describing human beings rather than value free adjectives (colors) attempting to describe a population's visual qualities with accuracy.

Table 1, the city of Salvador has even higher concentrations of Black and Brown individuals than the state and nation that contain it.

Table 1: Regional racial composition, government classifications

	Brazil	**Bahia**	**Salvador** metro region
White	47.7	20.9	15.6
"Brown"/Pardo	43.1	62.9	54.9
Black/Preto	7.6	15.7	28.4
Asian	1.1	.6	1.0
Indigenous	.4		

Source: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística

On Salvador da Bahia as a historically and anthropologically significant setting, Williamson (2012) writes:

> Colonial structures, in varied stages of restoration and neglect, remind residents and visitors of Salvador's past as the first capital of the Portuguese colony of Brazil until 1763, of the wealth built upon sugar plantations and slave labor, and of the subsequent abandonment of the darker Northeast as an economic region in favor of the whiter South. One of three original ports for the traffic in African slaves, Salvador welcomed many of Brazil's estimated four million slaves who survived the voyage across the Atlantic—far more than ever made their way to the United States. Salvador is widely acknowledged as the most "African" city in a country that, with the exception of Nigeria, has more Afro-descendants than any other country in Africa or the African diaspora. (p. 259)

Side by side, the demographic portraits of the various states of Brazil (see Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística) are suggestive of a variety of heritages, concentrated in various degrees and informing the aesthetics and identity within each region. In addition to demographic differences, there are cultural differences across Brazil's regions. The "abandonment" that Williamson describes above was mostly due to decline in prices of sugar produced in the north and the increase in exports of minerals and coffee out of the south. Currently Brazil has several major industries, including agriculture, textile, metal, chemical and machine manufacturing, and "services." (CIA World Factbook).

Figure 1: Map of Brazil regions

Source: Brazil Consulting, 2010

Despite the current, relative economic health of the nation, income inequality and poverty remains a problem in Brazil. Those who are extremely poor live in the shadow of the small portion of Brazilians who own the greater portion of the nation's wealth. Economic stratification is highly correlated with race, as is the case throughout the Americas. In sharp contradiction of the celebrated myth of "harmonious race relations and lack of racial hierarchy" in Brazil, this correlation is a well-documented consequence and legacy of slavery (Williamson, 2012). Afro-Brazilians, most vulnerable to industry change, are highly concentrated among the jobless, especially in urban areas such as Salvador. Additional forms of urban malaise, such as chronic public drunkenness, drug addictions, and violence, features Black faces.

An additional legacy of slavery and racial hierarchy is the "Whitening" of Brazilian society, particularly the elite. Such Whitening was partly a result of explicit social policy encouraging the immigration of European individuals through the 1950s (Bailey and Telles; Guimarães, 2010). The whitening was also a statistical phenomenon due to the "ambiguity" in racial classification and self classification involved in official population estimates. Self-identification, including various degrees of misidentification, has paralleled the social order, including the social significance of the terms for Brown and Black, i.e., Moreno, Pardo, Negro and Preto (Bailey and Telles; Telles, 2004). Recent demographic analysis has noted an *increase* in the percent of people calling themselves Brown or Black. One sociologist has noted:

> ...there is strong evidence that the Brazilian population is using darker colours to classify itself racially. This change can be attributed to a range of factors and conditions... They range from demographics (the decline in European immigration since the 1950s) to the political (increased black mobilisation of the last decades); ... to representations (the Brazilian media changed its secular misrepresentation of Blackness); from the psychological (the development of self-esteem and even a certain pride of being Black) to the institutional (the recent establishment of affirmative actions creating material rewards to the assumption of Afro-descent). The fact is that if Brazil has ever had a unique system of race classification, this system is today under stress from other competing systems. (Guimarães, 2010)

As illustrated below in the discussion of racial consciousness and Black political identity, such social change--however minor relative to the goals of activists--has occurred in Brazil, and this change is most resonant in the contemporary carnival of Salvador da Bahia.

Carnival and the carnivalesque as an opportunity for differentiation

On balance, Salvador is a dynamic urban setting in which carnival unfolds each year. There are some common features of carnival and related contexts across the globe. One near-universal is public celebration, featuring behavior "outside" of the normal everyday behavior. Often carnival involves street performance, dancing, parades, loud music, street crime, public and excessive alcohol consumption, role reversal, including gendered cross-dressing. Carnival in modern urban settings often features special concerts and transient commercial activity, implying seasonal work for many.

Brazil is well known for spectacle in carnival and may in fact embody carnival in the symbolic sense, as--along with Trinidad and Tobago--images of feathered headdresses, skimpy and/or outlandish costumes and large floats literally parading in the main thoroughfares in these places have come to symbolize carnival (and, in some sort of symbiotic relationship touched on below, the term carnival immediately calls to mind these places because they are home to such images). Observers have seen some indication of each of the elements above in Brazilian carnival as much as or more than in carnival elsewhere. Both Brazil and Trinidad have influenced the way carnival is celebrated in other places as much as European and African religious and cultural practices have historically influenced how carnival is celebrated in Brazil and Trinidad.

Much of Brazil's reputation regarding carnival is due to images of floats and sambistas parading in the Sambadrome in Rio de Janeiro. However, carnival in northeast locations such as Salvador is different from carnival in the southern cities of Rio and Sao Paulo. Party culture dominates and the elements above are present in both cases, however carnival in Salvador has several important features. One feature is the prominence of Afro-Brazilian culture, particularly popular among all races at carnival time, and performances presented by Afro blocos (alternatively, "blocos Afro" or "blocos Afros"), social groups most known for their public presence, cultural programming and elaborate processions during carnival.

Collective Representation and Public Messaging in Music and Movement

Samba was created by enslaved Africans who blended European, native and Central and West African musical traditions. After generations as underground "Black" music, Samba became so popular that it was legitimized and through political use appropriated as the national music of Brazil. Just as several different musical traditions from Europe, Africa and indigenous America were combined to create samba, samba has generated several other genres.

Samba Afro represents a re-Africanization of samba music, inserting particular African rhythmic phrases and language such as Yoruba into the music, and combining elements of the traditional rhythms such as samba de roda and ritual candomblé percussion with the musical structure of samba duro and the basic batucada formation of samba. Bahian blocos Afro adopted the theme of African percussiveness, at times going as far as purging ensembles of all but drums, to distance themselves from samba schools (Meneses, 2014). Samba Reggae represents another musical homage and international connection, introducing the musical influence of fellow descendants of enslaved Africans across the Caribbean. The music of Bob Marley is said to have been particularly influential, and the musical influence was mere part of a whole protest culture within which Rastafari politics were trending worldwide in the 1980s (Honotorio, 2008). In this sense, the re-Africanization of samba music paralleled and supported changes in the global popular aesthetic.

Performance of Afro Blocos are not just musical; Afro Blocos tend to use Afrocentric imagery, e.g., cowry shells or bright colors, and display evidence of coordinated, thematic expression of cultural and ethnic heritage. Analogous to other musical forms within and beyond Bahia, the performance of Afoxe, Samba Afro, Samba Reggae and Axe music, all fairly race conscious musical forms, includes physically embodiment and display of racial identity. The fluidity of race in nations such as Brazil is a function of physical and behavioral self presentation, and as such is highly malleable (Roth-Gordon, 2013). Thus, visual and performative coordination is necessary and can be seen in the colors and shapes in the band and bloco advertisements and on the drums used for playing this music in public, plus the costumes for revelers and other participants. The coordination within the bloco is also behavioral, e.g., in the positioning and deference to elders and leaders during the dancing and other parade activities.

Collective Representation and Public Messaging in Music and Movement

The political and social context for the musical and performative innovations above is threefold: first, Brazil was under a repressive military dictatorship for over two decades; second, Brazil and Salvador had an unacknowledged but very much experienced history of racial oppression and discrimination; third, Afro-Brazilians had for generations practiced costly measures, e.g., hair straightening, to conform to mainstream Brazilian society. It is

important to note that the first Afro bloco, Ile Aiye, was founded by Black activists in 1974, a year marking the culmination of some aspects of the Pan African, Negritude and Negrismo movements, designed "challenge the theory of race hierarchy and black inferiority developed by philosophers such as Friedrich Hegel" (Banoum, no date).

The Pan African movement included collective global action led by Black elites toward global consciousness among African peoples and their descendents, religious interests. Its explicitly anti-colonial mission included "self-government in Africa, the return of expropriated lands, the development of the masses, and for race leaders to align themselves more closely to black workers." In particular, the movement featured a series of international conferences spearheaded by the Trinidadian barrister Henry Sylvester Williams in 1900. (Makalani, no date)

While the last Pan-African Congress was June 17–19, 1974, the Negritude and Negrismo movements have carried on for generations, and together with the Black Power movement in the US and other movements of the time, have marked the 20th century as a moment of historical transition described in the following description offered by Bertrade Ngo-Ngijol Banoum.

> They found solidarity in their common ideal of affirming pride in their shared black identity and African heritage, and reclaiming African self-determination, self–reliance, and self–respect. The Négritude movement signaled an awakening of race consciousness for blacks in Africa and the African Diaspora. This new race consciousness, rooted in a (re)discovery of the authentic self, sparked a collective condemnation of Western domination, anti-black racism, enslavement, and colonization of black people. It sought to dispel denigrating myths and stereotypes linked to black people, by acknowledging their culture, history, and achievements, as well as reclaiming their contributions to the world and restoring their rightful place within the global community. (no date)

The most influential social and historical force in the development of Afro blocos and thus the contemporary aesthetic of Salvador's carnival is the Movimento Negro Unificado (MCU, or Unified Black Movement), a profound and lasting social movement which arose officially in 1978 in Sao Paulo in the wake of the US civil rights and Black Power movements and the global movements described above and is responsible for the declaration of November 20 as the National Day of Black Consciousness (Covin, 2006; Honotorio, 2008). Afro blocos were developed out of this revolutionary moment in global Black consciousness, which infused the formation of other Afro blocos such as Olodum (1979), Muzenza (1982), Malê Debalê (1979), and Cortejo Afro (1998). Each of these blocos was a neighborhood based impetus that flourished into cultural activities rooted in political and social programming, and each was part of Brazil's answer to the global movement across the African diaspora to look to shared ancestry with honor rather than shame.

While there was some often very vocal tension within the movement with regard to compromising mission and forefronting culture at the cost of politics, and "a more fluid racial

categorization system combined with the enduring power of racial democracy" made it difficult for race activists to launch a "race"-based movement (Williamson, 2012), race consciousness and support for activism was most successful through the medium of music. Musically speaking, "the theme of rhythmic centrality and complexity as expressed in polyrhythmic candomblé grooves was also strategically used by black musicians to support black empowerment discourses during the so-called process of re-Africanization of Bahian carnival of the 1970s and 1980s" (Meneses, 2014). Thus, bringing together music, religion, language, and expressions of resistance, blocos such as Olodum emerged as cultural and political projects to combat prejudice through, as in the case with Olodum, making African history known (Black Women of Brazil, 2014).

The emphasis on culture and history resonated with the emergence of political identity (Covin, 2002). The cultural activities of the blocos are the most visible and widespread vehicle for messaging and activism. Thus, as expressed by a member of the Movimento Negro, the actions of blocos Afros were fundamental to the affirmation of black identity in Brazil (Black Women of Brazil, 2014).

On the 40th and 35th anniversaries of the formations of two of the oldest blocos, popular sentiment has acknowledged the contributions of the blocos to the racial awareness, positive self-esteem, prosocial activity, education, neighborhood improvement of Afro Brazil, even as the groups have become commercialized and most fans are unaware of the extent and depth of the specific social programs the blocos have been able to actualize.

Coordinated, thematic expression of African and native cultural heritage

One of the ways in which Afro blocos go about their cultural and historical mission is through aesthetic work. Carnival and other performance costumes, as well as pertinent instruments are decorated with colors and patterns specific to ethnic heritage and group identity, for example Olodum's notorious green, red, yellow and black. Research in African history influences the seasonally changing costumes of the blocos, particularly Ile Aiye and Cortejo Afro.

In correspondence with the African influenced music, described earlier, the lyrics of the music reflect pride and appreciation of the beauty of Black people and refer to skin, hair, and resilience in the face of oppression (Tosta, 2010). There are also references to Zumbi, the legendary leader of the Palmares community of escaped slaves, and other Brazil-specific African history (Appiah and Gates, 2005).

Figure 2: Ile Aiye dancers in public celebration of selection of Brazil to host 2014 world cup

Source: Agecom from Brasil, via
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Copa_2014_Salvador_%C3%A9_cidade-sede_4.jpg

A particular style of dance accompanies the revolutionary music and costuming described above. The most notable performances are given by Ile Aiye dancers, the most elite of whom compete at an annual event called Noite da Beleza Negra (night of black beauty) for the title of Deusa do Ebano (ebony goddess). The dance movement, performed by young women dressed head to toe in raffia (fringe made of natural fibers) and brightly colored fabric with Afrocentric patterns and symbols on them. As folklorist Pravina Shukla describes:

> These beauties dance barefoot (rather than the high heels of Rio de Janeiro dancers), light on their feet, arms flung back in a rotating gesture, their bodies turning continuously, making their skirts swell and swirl. Their dance and costumes evoke Africa--whether in reality or in fantasy… The winner of Ile Aiye's contest--a Deusa do Ebano (the Ebony Goddess)--will stand on display atop the bloco's float during the three days of their carnival performance, gorgeous in her personification of Africa in Brazil. (2015)

As illustrated in Shukla's description, performers embody racial consciousness by acting out identity, awareness and resistance. The work of the blocos is performative, not an exclusively conceptual process.

Projecto Dida, a female oriented bloco founded in 1993, offers another example in which performance reflects racial identity and history. In the case of Dida, this history is taught to women and girls directly through lessons and indirectly through performance art, e.g., dancing and drumming while wearing replications of muzzles known to have been forced on enslaved Africans, most notably the legendary Bantu princess Anastacia. The muzzles are worn as homage to their enslaved ancestor and as protest of contemporary oppression of Afro-Brazilian women. In the context of concerts and carnival, the muzzle and costumes made of burlap fabric (as worn by slaves, according to Dida) are artistic expression through costume design. But this wardrobe also functions as raising awareness of the history and contemporary social problems they represent.

Figure 3: Album cover by Banda Dida

Source: http://www.dida-salvador.com/
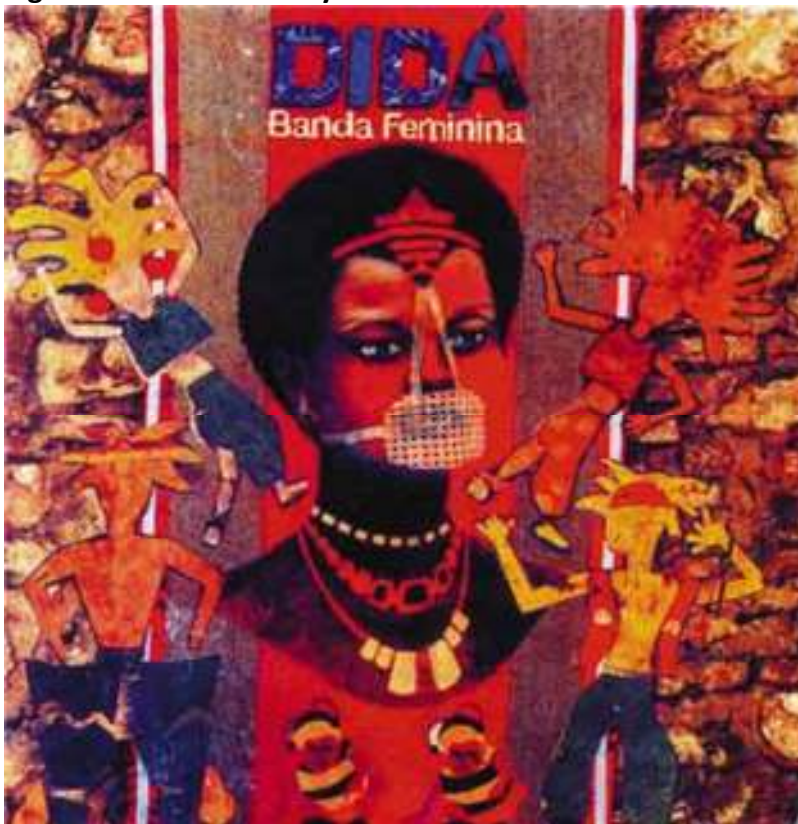
A final observation of emergent and embodied racial consciousness is revealed in discussion about the bloco Cortejo Afro, whose president and designer uses African images and themes in the branding and annual costume designs. The expectation in the use of Yoruba words and sometimes obscure African symbols is not that the aesthetics will be appreciated only by anthropologists and folklorists who can decipher their meanings, but that these symbols would also engage people who are historically, culturally or even basically illiterate. Even those who cannot read or write in everyday life can wear African history on their clothes during carnival, and through conversations as people ask and talk about these symbols the individuals, the wearer may be motivated to learn (A. Pitta, personal interview, June 18, 2015).

Situating Afro Bloco race consciousness in social theory

The activities and products of the Afro blocos are an ongoing, artistic reflection of the political and social movements out of which they were born. This context is clearly a case of racial consciousness increasing across generations. Two other constructs help explain the process by which such consciousness can be aided or inhibited given the fourfold context of Afro bloco emergence and development:

1. shrinking agricultural and manufacturing industries
2. expanding tourist industry
3. political repression
4. social unrest, including mass dissatisfaction with discrimination and excessive social control

These factors help explain the trajectory of awareness, acceptance, and commercialization of racial and cultural heritage evident in the celebration of carnival in Salvador.

The case of Olodum may help illustrate how racial consciousness as manifested and maintained by public performance is not necessarily an unencumbered and unambiguously positive social process. Olodum is the most popular and has the most tourist appeal among the blocos, and their popularity represents not only the group's success but also the integration of Afro blocos and samba reggae into the mainstream culture of Salvador and Bahia. In fact, images of Olodum percussionists lifting large surdos (bass drums) are used to represent the culture of Salvador and Bahia in advertisements and government announcements. To the untrained eye, with no knowledge of the history and mission of the organization, Olodum currently does not appear to be explicit in its focus on African or Afro-Brazilian heritage. Their emphasis on Latin American and Caribbean musical forms, i.e., Reggae, currently dominates the presentation of their main musical concert act and bloco. For example, their song Tekila containing lyrics in both Portuguese and Spanish, references and appeals to party culture:

É pra beber ô	It is to drink oh
E não pra se embriagar	And not to get drunk
Me gusta tequila	I like tequila
Me gusta cerveja	I like beer
A cada mañana	Every morning
Bate na cabeça	Knocks on the head
Sangue de touro	Bull's blood
Carta nevada	Letter snowfall
Piña colada	Piña colada
Tequila bum bum	Tequila bum bum

É pra beber ô	It is to drink oh
E não pra se embriagar	And not to get drunk
O som tão envolvente	The sound as engaging
Eu não parao de dançar	I do not forthe dancing
A noite está tão boa	The night is so good
E tão longa será	And so long will
Eu sei que é penetrante	I know that is pervasive
O som do meu olodum	The sound of my olodum
Escorregue no balanço	Slip on the balance sheet
Pois é algo incomum	It is unusual
É pra beber ô	It is to drink oh
E não pra se embriagar	And not to get drunk

The increased presence and popularity of African culture, be it deeply reverential as in Ile Aiye's work or loosely connected as in Olodum's recent work, is evident in a phenomenon called Baianidade, a comprehensive, unified identity and expression of the regional culture of Bahia embraced uniformly by all race. Baianidade is a romanticization that benefits Baianos and tourists alike. Each is afforded a share in this collective identity, of which people can speak with pride.

Inclusive as it may be, Baianidade is not considered a universally positive phenomenon. As comparative literature scholar Piers Armstrong put it, in Baianidade "a social compromise is effected whereby material space and symbolic prestige are conceded to the black community in exchange for a relative passivity" (1999). In particular, Baianidade serves as a platform for arguments of racial democracy and post racial society, as White Brazilians are afforded a common identity with Afro-Brazilians and this identity is commodified and eroticized.

☐ ☐

Baianidade:
**"a social compromise is effected whereby
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☐ ☐

The sense of belonging and empowerment associated with Baianidade recalls the Marxist concept of false consciousness, loosely defined as appearing above one's social station or even impervious to the class structure. It is not only the absence of class consciousness but also the particular hubris of the lower and middle class in interpreting symbolic concessions by the elite as gains in actual material conditions or power. In the case of Afro blocos, their popularity and visibility in mass media appear as civic and political representation, however, this representation is merely visual and does not necessarily indicate any increased levels of citizenship, status or power. Moreover, the remuneration associated with increased visibility may obscure deeper financial lack and more damaging binds.

Williamson (2012) elaborates on the economic and political compromise especially required of Afro blocos:

> Ile Aiye and Olodum remain critical to the raising of consciousness and identity formation for Afro-Brazilians; they remain the most recognizable institutions of the black movement. However, the blocos are also very dependent—because of their ties to the tourism industry and carnival—upon politicians and officials for survival, even while those very same officials work to continue their disadvantage and that of black Bahians. The blocos do not benefit sufficiently for their participation—as they constantly run the risk of not having enough sponsorship or financing—while their survival is dependent upon those who threaten them. These struggles for the blocos' survival remained despite the continued growth of carnival and tourism in Bahia—a growth advanced through the continued promotion of Afro-Brazilian culture as the primary attraction.

Illustrated this way, false consciousness appears as an underhanded, partially self induced trap of which Afro blocos are not completely aware but are mostly complicit. Such a bind can be economic and/or racial.

An alternative perspective on the cultural predicament of Afro blocos is the concept of double consciousness, loosely defined as seeing oneself through the eyes of others, particularly one's oppressor. This is an explicitly racial theory developed by W.E.B. Dubois based on the experience of Africans in the U.S. The Negro, as described by DuBois (1994), is "a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world— a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world."

This theory does not suggest a lack of awareness or delusion as false consciousness would imply. Rather, the double consciousness implies that blocos are well aware of how they are perceived despite the mismatch between this perception and their own (collective) self-concept and self-representation. In his most often quoted paragraph from the *Souls of Black Folk*, DuBois describes the tension between self and other.

"It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness— an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." (1994)

The tension between self and other is a generally important function of living in a society, as one needs to be socialized, and socialization is an ongoing lifelong process. Thus it is human nature to see and reflect on ourselves in the mind of the other. In a society hierarchically organized around race, the perspective of "other" is hostile to those at the bottom of the hierarchy. Awareness of this hostility and internalization of it is a natural outcome of socialization, membership and investment in society. Thus, this torn sense of self is no moral or intellectual judgement of those oppressed in such societies. The hostile side of the two-ness, DuBois implies, will be there as long as it is present in society at large.

In modern society, which is not post racial but has reached a turning point in Black liberation beyond which the same caliber of "contempt and pity" as experienced when DuBois wrote this theory, these sentiments are less likely to be as damaging. However the same mechanism of self awareness, informed simultaneously by self and society, remains a factor in how people are socialized and interact, including presenting themselves. I argue here that the Afro blocos' presentation of self is informed by contemporary society the racialized setting of urban life and tourism, including the compromise described above.

As blocos Afro have become more accepted and appreciated, they now have to contend with the "contempt and pity" of Brazilian society in more integrated ways, engaging the urban space that they previously were excluded from. In addition to carrying on the revolutionary musical and aesthetic activities of the cultural programs in support of Afro-Brazilian communities, they must now contend with increasing status and commercial value as blocos may respond to pressure toward more commercially viable presentation. As performance groups, Afro blocos would not be unique in shaping their presentation to audience expectations as well as state influence, especially if that influence is presented as cooperation. The question remains as to whether changes in blocos' self-presentation aligns with changes in self awareness.

Conclusive remarks on Afro Blocos and Consciousness

Racial consciousness is a global phenomenon of response to racialized societies and has taken shape internationally for a century. Racial consciousness is a collective phenomenon, and thus it is interesting when viewed through a tracing the history of social movement. While Black Brazil was always aware of its own conditions, political repression and the myth of racial democracy inhibited solidarity and true racial consciousness. Tapping into global racial solidarity, the racial consciousness in Brazil seemed to have found a conductive force through music and other performance art. Like chicken and egg, political and cultural

programs generated each other, and the latter gained currency well beyond the scope of social movement.

The compromises necessary as a result of the commercial success of blocos combined with state support and appropriation have created an interesting yet challenging position for Afro blocos. Just as society has reached a point of no return in Black liberation, Afro blocos have changed the nature and aesthetic of Salvador carnival and even Bahia's representation more generally. Whether the commercial success of some Afro blocos will lead to actual social change beyond the celebrations, i.e., change in discrimination and other social problems for Afro-Brazilians, remains to be seen on a regional and national scale.

However, compromised as they may be, I see no evidence that the major Afro blocos are resting on their laurels with regard to political and social change. As "Preto" and "Negro" continue to be spoken and sung confidently with pride, and as the rewards of commercial success continue to be channeled into prosocial neighborhood and youth programs, the Afro blocos already have actualized the consciousness they have aimed to achieve.

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