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Confounding Anti-racism: Mixture, Racial Democracy, and Post-racial Politics in Brazil

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Abstract
In this article, I analyze the particularity of post-racial ideology in Brazil. I examine recent deployments of mixture and racial democracy as re-articulations of historically hegemonic versions of these ideologies that minimize the problem of racism, deny its systemic nature, and deem ethno-racial policies as threats to achieving nonracial belonging and citizenship. Drawing on scholarship on race and racism from the United States, Brazil, and elsewhere in Latin America, I delineate a relational framework for analyzing the post-racial and apply this framework to three examples of post-racial ideology. Through these examples, I illustrate the problematic logics shaping aggressive investments in the post-racial as future promise to the detriment of addressing the unequal effects racial difference presents for inclusion/exclusion today. The article asserts the necessity of mounting transnational and interdisciplinary theoretical, epistemological, and practical strategies to challenge the ways post-racial ideologies rearticulate racial hierarchies, maintain racial subordination, and delimit social change.

Keywords
sociology, race and ethnicity, ideology, post-racial, racial democracy, mixture, identity politics, Brazil

Introduction

Post-racial ideology exists today in the Americas in diverse, yet analogous forms. These forms share a rhetoric of racial progress amidst systemic racial hierarchy (Hernández, 2012), while exhibiting a range of discourses and practices that include race/color-blindness, the denial or minimization of racism as an issue, persistent forms of antiblackness, and assertions that racial mixture and/or multiracialism can ameliorate the unequal effects of racial difference. The increasingly relational and comparative turn in the study of racial politics and ideology in the Americas situates

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local patterns within transnational processes as a means to better interpret and challenge the effects of racism on diverse Afro-descendant populations (Golash-Boza and Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Hernández, 2012; Lao-Montes, 2007; Stam and Shohat, 2012; Warren and Sue, 2011; Vargas, 2008, 2012). However, despite signaling that post-racial thinking shapes contemporary race relations, with few exceptions (see Hernández, 2012) scholars have not situated the range of discourses and practices within a broader framework of post-racial ideology that can capture their intersecting, related, and mutually reinforcing nature.

This article contributes to this task, elaborating aspects of the post-racial ideology as a strategy of power in Brazil while identifying the dynamics it shares with regional and hemispheric varieties. I pursue a relational rather than comparative analysis that takes as its point of departure that shared rhetoric of racial progress uttered in the midst of ongoing, systemic racial hierarchy, oppression, and antiblackness (Hernández, 2012; see also Stam and Shohat, 2012; Vargas, 2012). A relational analysis of post-racial ideology reveals the ways in which post-racial discourses and practices persist even amid varying levels of societal recognition of racism and state implementation of ethno-racial policies, especially in Latin America. A relational analysis of post-racial ideology can also help delineate important conceptual linkages and suggest bases for shared political struggle against its present and future mobilization as a strategy of power.

I define as 'post-racial ideologies' those forms of thought, discourse, and action that evade, delegitimize, and seek to eliminate racial differences and their effects from the focus of academic scholarship, activist struggle, public debate, and state policy. Post-racial ideologies operate through racialized forms of power while simultaneously claiming the non-significance of race. They generate fraught understandings of belonging and inclusion that elide racial difference and structural racism in ways that allow the re-articulation rather than the transformation of racial inequalities within national and global developments. Moreover, when deployed as a strategy of power, post-racial ideologies continually seek to depoliticize race, racism, and difference in ways that demobilize anti-racist politics, substantive cultural recognition, and material redistribution.

In the Brazilian case, it is through a focus on the shifting deployments of racial mixture and racial democracy that we can analyze post-racial ideology as a strategy of power. Today, mixture and racial democracy – the latter being the idea that race relations are relatively harmonious and race plays a minor role in shaping life chances – no longer stand as hegemonic ideologies that mask the existence of racism and racial inequality. Nonetheless, they continue to drive notions of racial progress and racial transcendence that are foundational to post-racial ideology. With mixture, excessively positive readings idealize it as a unifying, inherently anti-racist process that blurs racial boundaries and equally assimilates black, brown, and white peoples into a hybrid national character defining collective belonging (Fry, 2007). For racial democracy, while most no longer believe it exists as a present reality, it persists as an as ideal hope, aspiration, and future promise that captures the ongoing desire for an egalitarian, harmonious society that shuns racial divisions (Bailey, 2009; Da Costa, n.d.; Joseph, 2013). Here, future hope often overwhelms current action to address structural racism.

In this paper, I analyze the ways deployments of mixture and racial democracy result in partial readings of race relations. These result in the minimization of the problem of racism, the denial of its systemic nature, and the deeming of ethno-racial policies as threats to achieving nonracial belonging/citizenship. To make my case, I first outline the various discourses and practices shaping post-racial ideology in Latin America and the United State to draw out the broader context of its operation and to specify its emergence in Brazil. Second, I elaborate five key aspects of post-racial ideology and their typical appearance in the Brazilian context, namely, *racial progress and transcendence, race-neutral universalism, moral equivalence, distancing moves*, and the *hyperconsciousness/negation of race dialectic*.[1] I then analyze three significant examples of Brazilian

post-racial politics: (1) racialization versus non-racial universalism, (2) the commonsense notion that 'we are all mixed' and therefore 'we are not racist', and (3) the characterization of multiculturalism as divisive difference that threatens to undo Brazilian hybridity. These examples illustrate the problematic presuppositions shaping the defense of, and investment in, the future promise of post-racial harmony to the detriment of confronting actual unequal histories and effects of racial difference within the hierarchical forms of inclusion shaped through racial mixture. In this way, the examples demonstrate how the post-racial as a strategy of power confounds anti-racism through its intense interest to move beyond 'race' at the expense of addressing its societal effects.

Situating Brazil within Hemispheric Post-racial Ideologies

In the United States, the term 'post-racial' occupies a prominent place in public and scholarly debates and is considered a relatively recent development stemming from the color-blind politics of the 1980s and further aggravated by the election of the first black president, Barack Obama (Cho, 2009; Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Wise, 2010). Here, post-racialism represents a '21st-century ideology' that shapes the retreat from race as an explicit social and policy issue. This process involves a strategy engineered by social conservatives to thwart gains won by the civil rights movement. It also involves the increasing appeal of post-racialism's general principles to liberal, progressively-minded thinkers who are 'exhausted' by norms that limit free discussion of race (Cho, 2009). US post-racialism does not outright deny the salience of race, but it maintains that racial progress has largely transcended racism's most pernicious effects, and thus the state should play a less direct role in ensuring racial equality.

In Latin America, political activism and the resultant emergence of multicultural and ethno-racial policies over the past 20 to 30 years has generated concrete initiatives for black and indigenous peoples. These have helped reshape societal perceptions of racism and racial diversity to create more critical understandings of mixture and racial democracy that break with historically dominant tendencies to deny racism, embrace mixture as singularly harmonious, and believe in racial democracy as societal fact. Twenty-first century discourses on racism in various Latin American countries can now be characterized by varying levels of the recognition of racism as well as public disparagement of discrimination (Bailey, 2009; Da Costa, n.d.; Golash-Boza, 2010; Guimarães, 2006; Silva and Reis, 2012). Nonetheless, race- and color-blind ideologies, which involve various levels of denial, continue to have a strong grip on thinking throughout Latin America (Warren and Sue, 2011; Golash-Boza, 2010). Moreover, anti-black perspectives remain so embedded in the social fiber of the region through stereotypes, language, and violence that the subordinated status of Afro-descendants is viewed as logical and neutral (Hernández, 2012).

The current situation indicates that the shift from denial to recognition and from government inaction to policy implementation has not done away with ideas and practices that minimize the significance of racism and reproduce racial hierarchy and exclusion. This is true in the Brazilian case as well. In this way, it is important to historicize post-racial thinking in this context to comprehend the origins and logic of its current articulation.

In Brazil, post-racial ideology emerged through a combination of ideas about racial innocence, mixture, and anti-racialism.[2] First, the perception of 'racial innocence' was supported by the idea that Brazil lacked forms of state-sanctioned racism and discrimination or overt racial conflict after the abolition of slavery in 1888. This notion ignored, and continues to ignore, the active role of state in creating an 'extensive legislative network of racial restrictions to regulate race after the abolition of slavery' (Hernández, 2012: 48), including the racialization of immigration policy, whiteness as a requirement for employment within a variety of spheres in the labor market, enforced racial segregation of public space, and implicitly racialized education and health initiatives. Belief

in racial innocence furthered the idea of 'racial exceptionalism', which holds that 'relative to other multiracial polities Brazil is indeed a more racially and culturally accommodating society' (Hanchard, 1994: 43). Exceptionalism positioned the forms of belligerent racial violence and Jim Crow segregation of the United States as archetypal racist action and behaviour, creating the impression that racism in Brazil, if/when existent, was of a more benign nature.

The second, and perhaps more influential element in the emergence of post-racial ideology was the re-imagining of racial and cultural mixture as positive attribute that diminished racial boundaries, increased inter-racial harmony, and helped forge national unity. Emerging in the 1930s, positive ideas about mixture challenged the reigning biological and eugenicist racisms of the time that saw darker races as a hindrance to development and modernization. Ideas about harmony and conviviality encouraged interpretations of Brazil as a progressive racial democracy.[3] An 'anti-racialist' ideal rejecting the existence of 'races' was absorbed into the Brazilian way of being. This turned race into a foreign invention, a concept that itself came to signify racism and, in turn, something that did not exist for the Brazilian people (Guimarães, 2001). However, the anti-racialist ideal 'quickly fused with the policy of denying racism as a social practice', creating a notion that 'in Brazil there exists only "prejudice," meaning mistaken individual perceptions, which tend to be corrected in the course of continuing social relations' (Guimarães, 2001: 158).

Despite an aggressive anti-racialism, mixture did not eliminate white supremacy. Rather, it contributed to facilitating and justifying a system of pervasive racial and color stratification where whitening and antiblackness remained strong, as elsewhere in Latin America (Golash-Boza and Bonilla-Silva, 2013). At the same time, the *mestiço* (mixed-race) subject was essentialized as the ideal national subject. This shaped a commonsense discourse among Brazilians that 'we are all mixed' while also restricting the expression of non-*mestiço* forms of racial identity, subjectivity, and experience (Caldwell, 2007: 41–43; see also Dulitzky, 2005). Continual emphasis on the positive and convivial aspects of mixture turned a deeply racialized 'pigmentocracy' involving intersections of race with status, class, education, gender, and family origin into a national 'anti-racist' ideology that obscured 'the existence of an extremely efficient system of racial domination' (do Nascimento, 2007: 19; see also Gilliam, 2003; Guimarães, 1995).[4]

Denise Ferreira da Silva summarizes the consequence of mixture for the dynamics of racial difference in society, stating that:

> … the centrality of miscegenation in the national discourse … has precluded racial difference from becoming a prevailing basis for the constitution of culturally distinct groups, but it has *sustained a discourse and practices that constitute racial difference as a social category*. That is, in the Brazilian social configuration – its juridical, economic, and symbolic levels – individuals' positions are *determined by the degree of blackness in their bodies*, and this is expressed by the observable socio-economic disparities that mark black Brazilians' subaltern social trajectories. (2010: 18, emphasis added)

In other words, dominant understandings of mixture have hitherto rested on assumptions of post-racial transcendence within a system of privileges and practices deeply shaped by racial difference as a social category that structures socio-economic inequality, status, and discrimination. Black activists and scholars have long called the result of this trajectory of mixture and racial democracy a system of *racismo velado* (veiled racism) – the subtle, implicit, and disavowed racism with pernicious effects that are as deep, if not deeper for their inconspicuousness, as those of more explicit systems of racial domination.

Recent ethnographic and public opinion research suggests an un-veiling of the system is underway. More and more people see society as both mixed and racist (Joseph, 2013), identify simultaneously with mixture and more specific racial identities like *negro* (black) (Silva and Reis, 2012),

and agree with policies to address racism and discrimination (Bailey, 2009; Hernández, 2012). Yet a hyperconsciousness/negation of race still continues to emerge when people directly witness racist acts or engage directly with ethno-racial policies (Da Costa, forthcoming; Vargas, 2004). Moreover, racial democracy persists as promise and aspiration, sometimes defended vehemently by continual linkages made to non-racial belonging and race-blind state policy. At the same time, mixture endures as an inherently anti-racist process that marks the essence of Brazilian identity. It is in the intersection of these versions of racial democracy and mixture that the post-racial becomes strategy of power.

The Post-racial as Strategy of Power

In denying the significance of race in societies where racial difference persists as a social category of exclusion, post-racial ideologies constitute strategies of power that principally mobilize five key ideas: *racial progress and transcendence, race-neutral universalism, moral equivalence, distancing moves*, and the *hyperconsciousness/negation of race*. I elaborate each of these briefly here.

(1) *Racial progress and transcendence* (Cho, 2009) involve the belief that racial divisions of past generations have been curtailed or overcome and, as such, race-thinking and race-based policies are no longer necessary. In Brazil, racial progress and transcendence primarily involve two interrelated elements. The first includes the notions of racial innocence, racial exceptionalism, and the convivial race relations resulting from mixture discussed above. The second element of racial progress and transcendence involves the characterization of existing racism and inequality as a paradox and temporary state: Why has mixture *not yet* led to equality? Why have we *not yet* been able to achieve the racial democracy ideal? Here, the possibility of transcendence turns existing racism and inequality into aberrations or temporary expressions resulting from the fact that mixture has not had the chance to play itself out and reach its 'ultimate liberatory consequences' (Vianna, 2004: 4). Possible transcendence relies on the ascription of an inherently anti-racist character to mixture. This allows the existence of racism and racial inequality to be mischaracterized as paradox, rather than the product of the ways racial differences structure the dynamics of mixture. The notion of paradox – racism *should not* exist in a mixed society – perpetuates deterrence of the identification of racism as a structural aspect of such a society.[5]

The power of post-racial ideology emerges in the *promise* embedded in mixture to move society beyond race and towards the ideal of racial democracy. What makes progress and transcendence powerful as aspects of post-racial ideology is that they need not outright deny that racism exists. They simply minimize racism as a problem, treating experiences and incidents as of secondary importance to preserving exceptionalism and the broader, unifying desire among citizens to move beyond race. While ideologies of color-blindness and racial democracy on their own offer largely normative claims for a retreat from race that are aspirational in nature (Cho, 2009; Fry, 1995–6), post-racial ideology draws heavily upon the idea of an event or moment as marking the transcendence of race.

The aggressive investment in the post-racial promise of transcendence maintains strong sentiments of hope. However, the ways in which such hope is experienced depends on where you sit in the racial hierarchy (Da Costa, n.d.). For Afro-descendants, the promise of transcendence imposes a form of waiting, a 'racial time' where the benefits of equality and equal citizenship will supposedly eventually arrive (Hanchard, 1999). All the while, they must suffer the deleterious effects of racism and antiblackness on their psychological and physical well-being, sometimes in ways that destabilize the very possibility of inclusion signified within the promise of transcendence (Vargas, 2012). In other words, rather than paradox, the temporalities of time-lag (*not yet* been able to) and

promise (it will *eventually*) figure centrally in the strategy of power that operates through idealized versions of mixture.

(2) *Race-neutral universalism* (Cho, 2009) constitutes a normative ideal that draws on notions of equal rights to cast race-based policies as partial, divisive, and driven by special interests rather than the interests of a broader public. Liberal democratic notions of meritocracy and race-blindness hold sway, deeming the usage of race in policy as favoring one group over another, as special privileges, undeserved attention, and/or reverse racism. In Brazil, race-neutral universalism couples mixed belonging with the idea of universal equality before the law to minimize race as a category of social experience and therefore legislation. Race-neutral universalism also institutionalizes an assumed shared, similar, and equal experience of national belonging and access to citizenship rights, while defining universal policies in education, health, employment, and other spheres as the most desired way to address social exclusion.[6]

A race-netural universalism framework conceptualizes racialization as emerging through legislation and differentiated rights, rather than from structural racism in society that might necessitate differentiated legal measures as remedies. For example, a 2008 petition against affirmative action legislation in the form of racial quotas stated, 'Racism deeply infects societies when the law signals to people that they belong to a particular racial group – and that their rights are affected by this criterion of relevance of race' (Anti-Quota Manifesto, 2008).[7] The manifesto takes universal citizenship for granted in a manner that fails to see how race and other forms of difference like gender and sexuality shape identities and access to rights. By eliding racial histories and structures as well as the formal laws and informal practices that have shaped them, race-neutral universalism 'extends principles of liberalism to racial matters in an abstract and decontextualized manner' that preserves racially unfair situations (Bonilla-Silva, 2001: 141–2). The effect often (a) secures the universality of the privileged group (Young, 1990), (b) reproduces a 'targeted universalism' where color- or race-blind policies accrue further advantage, benefits, and privilege by race and class (powell, 2009), (c) privileges delimited class-based arguments that often overlap with conservative, reactionary racial projects (Stam and Shohat, 2005a, 2005b, 2012), and (d) causes a 'retreat from race' that, in failing to see how class and race articulate, will ultimately fail in addressing either (Roediger, 2006).

(3) The idea of *moral equivalence* (Cho, 2009) characterizes any use of race as equivalent simply because it is racialist, as in it invokes race as a category of difference. Moral equivalence intersects with race-neutral universalism to envision an ideal society where social and legal institutions should not discriminate negatively or positively based on race. It equates non-racialism with anti-racism: to prevent the usage of race in policy ameliorates its presence in society, removes its visibility, and diminishes its pernicious effects. Any break with non-racialism, such as recognizing racial difference and promoting anti-racist action, gets interpreted as racism or 'reverse racism', even when the source of such actions is black (Guimarães, 2001). Moral equivalence obliterates history and normalizes perceptions of a level playing field and meritocracy that sustain the idea that any usage of race becomes racist.

(4) A *distancing move* (Cho, 2009) underlies the attractiveness of post-racial ideology by proclaiming its difference from and superiority to previous forms of racism, current 'political correctness', and the racial obsession of identity politics and social justice advocates. In Brazil, distancing constructs the future promise of mixed universality and racial democracy as preferable to purportedly divisive ethno-racial and multicultural specificities. Racial innocence and the positive redemption of mixture in the early 20th century – the big events inaugurating the post-racial moment – represent progress and shape the possibility of racial transcendence. As such, bringing race into the conversation represents a regression; race-based remedies would mean race persists as a tool of classifying, dividing, and discriminating members of a population (Anti-Quota Manifesto, 2006, 2008).

Distancing move arguments assert that the recognition of difference would signal 'racialization' of the state in an era where race is largely understood as a false invention and where previously legally segregated countries like the United States are moving towards legal non-racialism and post-racialism in public discourse. This line of thinking situates black anti-racist politics and ethno-racial policies as outmoded, problematic, and similar to historical uses of race to oppress. At the same time, in constructing mixture and non-racialism as more progressive, distancing avoids asking just how successful these have been in actually dealing with racism and inequality. In this way, distancing also thwarts critical, explicitly anti-racist reconfigurations of mixture that address the dynamics of racial difference that shape its complexity.

(5) The *hyperconsciousness/negation of race dialectic* (Vargas, 2004) involves the anxious awareness of race/color and its hierarchical meanings with the simultaneous vehement negation of the significance of race. This dialectic shapes how Brazilians 'think about/repress, interrogate/passively accept, and justify/ignore social hierarchies', especially those based on race (Vargas, 2004: 444). In part an effect of the post-racial promise of racial democracy, the dialectic 'silences awareness of racial classifications and ensuing practices and representations', and as a consequence 'obscures the role race plays in determining one's position in the historical structures of power and resources'. At the same time, the dialectic undermines individual and societal claims to race-blindness 'inasmuch as it reveals how Brazilians are [actually] acutely aware of racial differences and utilize those to (often tacitly) justify, think about, and enforce behavior and social inequalities' (Vargas, 2004: 446).

Hyperconsciousness/negation expresses the effects of a putatively non-racial system that has in fact historically been, and continues to be, deeply concerned with the meaning of race and its connection to status, individual and national identity, and societal development. Even though the majority of Brazilians today believe that racism and discrimination are societal issues *in the abstract* (e.g. when asked on opinion surveys), in practice, when confronting actual situations loaded with racialized meaning, the hyperconsciousness/negation often emerges to cause individuals to minimize or deny the significance of race. Originally theorized for the Brazilian case, the dialectic appears in similar denials of the significance of race in Latin America (Dulitzky, 2005; Hernández, 2011) and 'color-blind racism' in the United States (Bonilla-Silva, 2010).

Considering the above factors, the primary effects of post-racial ideology include: (a) reinvigoration of non-racialism in ways that minimize the significance of race and avoid addressing its effects, (b) promotion of the false hope that progress and transcendence make race a non-issue, or issue of the past, which transforms ethno-racial policies into unnecessary, retrograde propositions, (c) delimitation of the terms of racial politics with implications for anti-racist and related struggles for justice and equality, and (d) naturalization of racial hierarchies and inclusion/exclusion through the detachment of whitening and antiblackness from the distribution of status, privilege, and disadvantage. The following section critically evaluates three prominent dimensions of Brazilian post-racial politics.

Three Examples of Brazilian Post-racial Politics

The emergence of multicultural and ethno-racial policies in Brazil over the past 15 years has generated concrete initiatives for black and indigenous peoples. Black movement activists, coupled with black and white race scholars and many in the general population, support recent ethno-racial policies as important means to address racism, discrimination, and inequality (Carvalho and Segato, 2002; Guimarães, 1999; Munanga, 1996; Telles, 2004; de Toledo, 2013). In contrast, critics of multiculturalism and ethno-racial policies (especially affirmative action) view them as divisive and inappropriate for the Brazilian context (Fry, 2007; Fry et al., 2007; Grin, 2004; Kamel, 2006).

Post-racial politics emerges within critics' arguments that conflate anti-racialism with anti-racism, minimize structural racism, and revive mixture and the ideal of racial democracy as morally superior, less divisive strategies to address racial inequalities.

The examples analyzed here are particularly significant for several reasons. First, they circulated widely during public debates in the media, academy, and broader society over the Federal Racial Equality Statute and affirmative action that occurred between 2006 and 2009.[8] Second, they represent the current articulation of historically hegemonic versions of ideologies of mixture and racial democracy that (intentionally or not) minimize racism and undermine anti-racist political efforts. Third, while those opposing policies like race-based affirmative action represent a predominantly white, middle-class minority, the virulence of their anti-affirmative action discourses has been so strong as to cause even some of the early beneficiaries of the policies to express ambivalence about their advisability (Gonzalez, 2010, cited in Hernández, 2012: 155). Moreover, this minority continues to dominate the mass media and comprise the political class with decision-making power to effect policies aimed at Afro-descendants.

As witnessed throughout the 20th and now 21st centuries, idealized mixture and racial democracy have staying power and the ability to re-emerge in rearticulated fashion despite over half a century of contestation, over a decade of implementation of ethno-racial policies, and state and societal acknowledgement of racism and discrimination as issues. More significantly, mixture and racial democracy continue to confound social justice and anti-racist efforts, illuminating how they persist as bases for the post-racial as a strategy of power.

Impending Racialization and the End of Post-racial Brazilianness

> In Brazil, [the Racial Equality Statute] would represent a radical revision of our national identity and the renunciation of the possible utopia of universal effective citizenship. (Anti-Quota Manifesto, 2008)

The above quote precisely illustrates the linkage between mixture, racial democracy, and post-raciality. On the one hand, it places race and racial categorization outside of the purview of the nation while simultaneously defining mixture and its non-racialism as a route towards 'universal effective citizenship'. On the other hand, ethno-racial policies, anti-racist activism, and the black politics of identity become threats to post-racial transcendence as embodied in the idea of universal equality before the law. Within this perspective, race-based policies attending to conditions facing Afro-descendants would undermine rather than produce equality between citizens because they would (1) classify them, or push them to classify themselves, racially, (2) take such classification into account to distribute rights, and as a result (3) produce racial divisions and animosity in society.

Anthropologist Yvonne Maggie, a white, longtime scholar of Afro-Brazilian issues and key figure opposing race-based policies, has stated:

> The [Racial Equality Statute] and quotas pressure us to not be Brazilians. Upon establishing the classification of Brazilians into two races, we would be another nation. … The people who are in favor of quotas tell us that this country is already in practice divided. Sure, but one thing is racism in society, another is racism by the state. It is against this state racism that we stand. And in favor of the proposal of 'a-racial' legislation.

When asked if the text of the Racial Equality Statute could be 'tempered', she stated, 'It could be the [statute of] equality and not racial equality, for racial equality is a contradiction. If races exist, equality does not exist. The first lesson is that race does not exist. Ethnic identity only creates suffering, it is an invention' (Colombo, 2006).

Like the Anti-Quota Manifesto (2008), Professor Maggie characterizes state ethno-racial policy as pressure to relinquish being Brazilian, as the imposition of racism, and thus, as threatening deep transformations of the nation. She takes for granted the ideas of the Brazilian state's racial innocence that erases its own history of 'state racism' and racial regulation (Hernández, 2012), not least its role in the very production of mixture, non-racialism, and racial democracy as national identity and means to silence the race question (Davis, 1999; Hanchard, 1994; Moura, 1988). At the same time, she minimizes racism through her discussion of race as categorical difference. While race is indeed an invention, as social construction it has lived embodied and material effects; racial difference makes a difference despite societal desires for its nonexistence. Implying that race has not yet caused suffering elides whitening and antiblackness as formative aspects of miscegenation. This helps uphold mixture as a de-racializing process that makes legal non-racialism a viable egalitarian benchmark for being and belonging. Within this logic, those seeking racial justice become problematic citizens whose demands destabilize order and constitute inappropriate burdens placed on the nation. The post-racial as a strategy of power confounds anti-racism once again.

By using the term 'we', Professor Maggie takes on the voice of all Brazilians to claim that the collective 'we' has thus far been free of suffering caused by ethnic or racial categorization, identity, and discrimination. To speak for, in this case, universalizes one particular perspective on mixture and belonging as representative of the nation. It also diminishes decades of black movement mobilizations challenging the negative meanings and effects of *their* blackness and the wounds of racism in *their* lives. In other words, lived experiences of being black *and* Brazilian that involve racism, dehumanization, and entrenched inequalities do not count as part of the 'we'; they are not *enough* to help understand how racial difference works in the Brazilian context nor determine how racial inequality should be addressed.

Those defending mixture and race-neutral universalism also link impending racialization to the creation of 'racial hatred'. They claim that Brazil could witness forms of violence and ethnic cleansing experienced in places like the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and South Africa (see, for example, Magnoli in 'Desigualdades' (Afropress, 2007); Fry in Strecker, 2006; Kamel, 2006). As rhetorical strategy, such claims (a) negate the specificities of racism and discrimination within a system based on mixture rather than stark racial categories and divisions, (b) deflect responsibility for tensions and violence caused by race onto black Brazilians, and (c) deter corrective action and delimit debates in ways that stifle anti-racist possibilities.

The threat of racialization paints Brazilianness under siege by ethno-racial and multicultural policies. This reduces a multifaceted struggle for racial justice to a simple question of identity politics, while elevating the defense of non-racialism to a defense of the core of the nation. Through race-neutral universalism, moral equivalence, and distancing, post-racial politics turns emergent ethno-racial policies, rather than longstanding racism and discrimination, into the point at which race becomes an issue. This not only re-centers the problem of race as a problem caused by blacks. It marks a specific point at which suffering caused by race/color ascriptions should matter – race-based legislation versus systemic antiblackness – to reveal an alignment between white privilege, mixed belonging, and claims to universal equality as a juridical reality.[9] An underlying totalitarian logic drives this version of 'anti-racism', signaling the ways in which oppressive preservations of the status quo in the name of national unity and collective identity can shape aggressive investments in mixture, racial democracy, and universal equality.[10]

'We Are All Mixed': Declarations of Mixture as Non-performatives

In discussions of Brazil's racial make-up, the statement 'we are all mixed' gets frequently repeated and often linked with the idea that, therefore, 'we are not racist'. However, such declarations

neither reflect nor bring about a post-racial society or state, constituting what scholar Sara Ahmed calls 'non-performative speech acts' (2004, 2006). Ahmed outlines non-performative speech acts as follows:

(1) They work by not bringing about the effects they name;
(2) The failure of the speech act to do what it says is not a failure of intent or even circumstance, but is actually what the speech act is doing;
(3) Such speech acts work as if they bring about the effects they name; they are taken up as if they are performatives, which has its own effects;
(4) Sayings are not doings, and the 'investment in saying as if saying was doing can actually extend rather than challenge racism' (2004: 52);
(5) Such speech acts work through defining the terms of engagement with race: 'We are "this" whilst racism is "that," so in being "this" we are not "that," where "that" would be racist' (2004: 53).
(6) The declarative mode of the speech act, as a way of doing something, offers a fantasy of transcendence in which 'what' is transcended is the very 'thing' admitted to in the declaration (2004: 54).

Consider the non-performative speech acts of journalist Ali Kamel, a vocal critic of the black movement and ethno-racial policies. Kamel titled his widely read and much discussed 2006 best-seller: *We Are Not Racists: A Reaction to Those Who Want to Transform Us into a Bi-color Nation* (*Não somos racistas: uma reação aos que querem nos transformer numa nação bicolor*). The title itself signals a reaction to ethno-racial policy and anti-racist mobilization, but the book's arguments against the possible negative effects of racial classification are overwhelmed by the praise of mixture and the denial that race is a structural issue. The book includes diverse renditions of the defense of mixture as inherently non-racialist and anti-racist as well as the object of individual and national pride. Key examples include:

> We liked to see ourselves this way, miscegenated. We liked to not recognize ourselves as racists. (2006: 19)

> I believe that we are still predominantly a nation that believes in the virtues of our miscegenation, of harmonious conviviality between all the colors, and in the advantages, the immense advantages, of being a country in which the racists, when they exist, become embarrassed by their own racism. (2006: 40)

> [Our] miscegenation is a reality and takes apart the argument that we are structurally racist. We cannot be. One fact, miscegenation, denies the other, racism. (2006: 103)

The statement 'we are all mixed' therefore 'we are not racists' is a non-performative speech act – no matter how frequently uttered, it does not bring about what it names (mixture as universal and equality-producing) and fails to do what it says (motivate active anti-racism). Such statements reinforce the impression of mixture in and of itself as anti-racist in logic and outcome. However, grounded in a material reality of whitening, antiblackness, and socioeconomic inequalities based on race, 'we are all mixed' constitutes a non-performative speech act because at the level of national commonsense it is taken up as if it acts, as if it demonstrates, moves towards, and/or produces racial transcendence. The speech act is non-performative precisely because being 'all mixed' is insufficient to not be racist; mixture does not undo, and can actually re-articulate, racialized meanings, attachments, and hierarchies. People are not 'all mixed' in a way that leads to a common

experience or the elimination of differential treatment based on skin color. Society is not free of racism, but instead constituted by the hyperconsciousness/negation of race. The obsession with validating mixture is itself an obsession with the pernicious stubbornness of race, a stubbornness that reveals the failure of mixture to produce a post-racial society.

What speech acts supporting idealized mixture offer are a fantasy of transcendence. In Ahmed's examination of anti-racism and declarations of whiteness, the explicit acknowledgement of racism and one's whiteness/privilege offers this fantasy. People acknowledge they are racists and that they are privileged, which has a way of moving them past race. In contrast, in declarations of 'we are all mixed' therefore 'we are not racists', what is assumed to be transcended is that which is denied: racism. Declarations of mixture function as 'claims to performativity', assumed to put in place the conditions through which racism can be transcended (cf. Ahmed 2004: 52–5). The assumed transcendence of racism in this case allows the speech acts to map the social space and consciousness of citizens as inherently nonracist, an effect of mixture as equalizing in outcome. Here, 'the investment in saying as if saying was doing' actually extends rather than challenges racism (Ahmed, 2004: 52).[11]

The sentiment of transcendence ignores the nagging question that emerges when this 'we' includes black movement activists and scholars who interpret mixture as cultural assimilation, psychological degradation, severely delimited inclusion, gendered violence, or genocide (do Nascimento, 1989; Smith, 2013; Vargas, 2004, 2008). Those who experience the socio-economic and psychological effects of miscegenation as oppressive and stifling do not have the privilege of thinking transcendence (see, for example, Sheriff, 2000, 2001). Even if, as oppressed, they invest some belief in racial democracy as an ideal (Da Costa, n.d.) or see mixture as a possible anti-racism strategy that blurs boundaries (Silva and Reis, 2012), they have to contend with the immediate and lasting effects of racial difference in their lives.

The inability of black and brown Brazilians to experience transcendence differs greatly from the way white and elite claims to mixed race ancestry work. Claims to mixture bring whites (safely) closer to the national ideal and bolster feelings of common subjectivity with black and brown Brazilians without necessitating they relinquish their socio-economic status and privilege or concretely challenge white supremacy and antiblackness (Sovik, 2009). Claiming mixture while being exempt from what it means to be dark-skinned expresses mixture's history of privilege, while assertions that 'we are all mixed' undermine claims to racism and discrimination made by those whose ancestry does make a (visible) difference.[12]

Recent genetic substantiation of Brazilian mixedness contributes to arguments shaping the discourse of 'we are all mixed'. DNA evidence gets mobilized as *incontestable proof* of the non-existence of races and the extent of mixture (Benjamin, 2007; Pena, 2007a, 2007b), but it does so in ways that obscure the difference between the biological non-existence of race and race as socio-historical reality. Genetic proof appears as self-apparent, disinterested evidence simply expressing the fact of shared mixture among the population. Genetics debunks the ideology of racial purity to reveal racial divisions as fabrications.

Such arguments, while laudable for pushing us to incorporate the non-existence of races into our moral convictions, further evade discussion of mixture as contested process with diverse meanings and outcomes. While leaving race behind signals our (already existing) common humanity, we cannot in fact do away with race if we do not do away with racism (Ahmed, 2004; see also Davies, 2002). Demonstrating the fraught nature of post-racial imaginaries and collectivities in the current historical conjuncture, the progressive intent of biological arguments can end up undermining concrete initiatives to address actually existing racisms, discrimination, and inequality.

Non-performative speech acts like 'we are all mixed' therefore 'we are not racist' not only fail to put into place real conditions to transcend racism, they also perform the very privilege they

claim to undo – 'we' are in fact not all mixed, or at least not all mixed in the same way; and 'we' cannot all safely claim mixture and be protected by the positive mixedness demonstrated in the whiter shades of (some of) our skins. The non-performative as exemplified in Kamel's work is wrapped up in the various assumptions underlying Brazilian post-raciality, especially the supposed inherent anti-racist character of mixture and the belief that being 'all mixed' mediates racial divisiveness and will eventually carry society towards non-racial belonging and post-racial transcendence. The discourse of 'we are all mixed' therefore 'we are not racist' substitutes for proactive efforts to address structural racism.

Multiculturalism and Black Politics as Undoing Brazil

Post-racial politics also underlie criticisms of multiculturalism, ethno-racial policies, and black anti-racism as the possible undoing of Brazil. Here, Brazil can be undone even though racial democracy never was a reality because it persists as ideal aspiration, as future promise warranting aggressive preservation of its vision and sentiment. Preserving promise necessitates securing racial and cultural mixture from political mobilizations (black movement organizations and race scholars), discourses (anti-racism and multiculturalism), and policies (multicultural and ethno-racial) that would undermine the production of equality through mixture and non-racialism. Preservation involves characterizing 'race-based' politics, discourses, and policies as imperial, foreign impositions by the more powerful institutional and intellectual agents of the Global North that threaten Brazilian specificity in its mixed hybridity.

Peter Fry, a white anthropologist and influential public opponent of race-based social policy and categorization, most visibly puts forward arguments defending this version of Brazilian specificity. In an article critiquing US-based black scholar Michael Hanchard's (1994) interpretation of the ideology of racial democracy as 'racial hegemony', Fry posits racial democracy as no less 'real' than racial discrimination because 'representations' are no less real than 'social relations':

> While democracy 'produces' a legally universalist society without 'racial' segregation, discrimination is only possible because there exists, prior to [democracy], another 'ideology' that contests the ideology of racial democracy. This 'ideology' orders bodies hierarchically according to 'appearance.' The inequalities between the *lighter skinned* and *darker skinned* … are the result of a 'market of colors,' free in principle (i.e. 'racial democracy'), but restricted in practice by the counter-ideology of hierarchical ordering of 'races' (i.e. 'racism'). (1995–6: 126, emphasis in original).

Fry asserts extant racisms as resulting from a prior ideology of racial hierarchization that pollutes the inherent universalist equality of racial democracy. The assertion claims colors have no racial meaning within racial democracy (i.e. they are 'free in principle'). This move excises 'racial democracy' from the history of race and racialization that shapes the epistemological and material inequalities of capitalist development as well as Eurocentric democratic theories and their applications throughout the Americas (Mills, 1997; Quijano and Wallerstein, 1992; Stam and Shohat, 2012). Fry critiques Hanchard's argument that black movement dismantling of racial hegemony will come through assertions of a strong black identity and race-based political claims. He sees them as teleological judgements positioning US black racial politics at the apex of political change. However, Fry's position creates another teleology where race-free universalism embodied in racial democracy 'counters [and will eventually overcome] the ideology that allows race discrimination to operate in Brazil' (Guimarães, 2001: 172). Democracy is at heart inclusive, rather than historically constructed through racial and other forms of privilege and exclusion.

Within this logic, Fry critiques the black movement, claiming the politics of race *can only perpetuate* ideologies of race discrimination, while the struggle for a distinct black identity that is

discursively bipolar (mobilized to challenge the power of mixture to deny racism) does not correspond to Brazilian realities and emic categories (Fry, 1995–6, 2000; see also Burdick, 1998). Despite highlighting important contextual dilemmas around racial categories, characterization of racial politics as 'out of place' in Brazil obscures the real question at hand – how to address racism, discrimination, and inequality without simply asserting the possibility of a fraught mixed universality as the main solution. This argument avoids understanding claims to black identity and 'black' as a racial/cultural category as political responses revealing what dominant nationalist ideologies have hitherto denied, with deep implications for Afro-descendants. Fry's argument does not even ponder the possibility that persistent anti-black antagonisms and white supremacy, from the perspective of the Afro-descended, reveal the corrupt character and impossible nature of the dominant national social and ideological project (Vargas, 2012).

More recently, Fry (2007) has suggested multiculturalism as the 'undoing' of Brazil and its mixed hybridity. Multiculturalism, he argues, highlights and preserves difference to produce heterogeneity, while mixture creates biological and cultural hybridity that assimilates and eliminates difference to create sameness. Premised on 'traditional a-racism' (i.e. anti-racialism), mixture and hybridity are liberating, uniting, and more likely to lead to equality. In contrast, premised on 'racism and racial/ethnic singularity' (2007: 238), the multicultural model reproduces divisive differences, more rigid boundaries, and heterogeneous forms of belonging. Moreover, multiculturalism originates from imperial institutional structures of global governance and knowledge production to impose a hitherto non-existent experience of 'difference' on a miscegenated peoples.

Fry's critique of multiculturalism echoes critiques that highlight its power as a global discourse as well as questions around the geopolitics of knowledge production, the global circulation of ideas and discourses, and their transformation into state policies (see also Hale, 2005; Walsh, 2002). However, the critique of globalization and power is not accompanied by a critique of the 'local' that challenges how mixture and racial democracy influence denials of racist incidents and minimizations of structural racism. At the same time, hybridity becomes a straightforward, progressive notion that erases implications of race, colonialism, gender, and global power inequalities within its own formation (Lund, 2006) as well as the depoliticizing effects of hybridity discourses on movements where cultural, physical, and material survival are at stake (Dirlik, 1997: ch. 10).

In terms of multiculturalism, Fry leaves unexplored its emergence and possibility with regards to contesting longstanding cultural, material, and psychic oppressions (Hooker, 2008). Critiquing multiculturalism in relation, rather than opposition, to critiques of racial democracy, mixture, and hybridity could draw out the similarities and distinctions in their logics of difference, especially their varied assimilations of race and culture to shape dominant conceptions of national identity and development that reproduce racialized capitalism (see, for example, Da Costa, forthcoming). Treating multiculturalism *and* mixture as 'two different types of Euro-domination' that emerged in different contexts but through similar histories of colonization, enslavement, and inequality (Stam and Shohat, 2005a) might actually help re-envision mixture in ways that invigorate, rather than assume, its anti-racist potential.

Given elisions committed by acclaiming mixture and hybridity as inherently transgressive, an argument that claims the 'undoing' of Brazil begs the question: Whose Brazil is being undone? What forms of identity are at stake and what forms of privilege do they conceal or expose? How does the notion of future promise embedded in the ideal of racial democracy unevenly distribute hope and suffering, life and death (Da Costa, n.d.)?

The dismissal of critical black thought and anti-racist proposals as the easy importation of foreign ideas or threats expresses the multifaceted nature of contemporary racialized power in various ways. First, it positions blacks as incapable of interpreting their own reality against 'foreign' ideas.

Second, it constructs black thinking on questions of rights, democracy, inclusion, and equality as tainted and 'Other', framing their perspectives as outside the nation. Third, it ignores the hemispheric racism and antiblackness that shapes black diasporic experiences and forms of belonging among Afro-descendants in the Americas (Patterson and Kelley, 2000; Lao-Montes, 2007). This includes the ongoing, blatant forms of violence and death inflicted upon Afro-descendants and the forms of cultural genocide masked as national inclusion (do Nascimento, 1989; Vargas, 2008). Fourth, dismissal as foreign or as a threat avoids considering that anti-racism and multiculturalism take root in Brazil precisely because the conditions for their emergence were already present (Sovik, 2009; Stam and Shohat, 2005a) and because they articulate hitherto ignored experiences and claims for recognition and redistribution.

The significant question pertaining to the post-racial as ideology *and* strategy of power here involves the defense of mixture and racial democracy as harmonious, egalitarian, and ideal *possibility*, in a situation where *actual* lived reality reveals frequent instances of racism, dehumanization, and a persistent socio-economic gap between Afro-descendants and Euro-descendants. Challenging the post-racial as strategy of power involves unveiling the mechanisms of thought and discourse that mobilize reified understandings of mixture, undergird denial, and continue to minimize racism with the effect of obscuring histories of racial difference and disciplining dissenting views that contest the promise of a post-racial future.

Conclusion: Challenging Premature Post-racialities

While ethno-racial policies suggest the decline of post-racial politics in state and society in the short-term, post-racial ideology continues to rearticulate itself in Brazil's 'multicultural moment' through challenges to the use of race as organizing principle within policy and political struggle. Continued investments in the future hope of racial democracy, as well as the defense of mixture as a positive, anti-racist process, constitute fundamental cores of this current articulation. This politics of future hope that draws on progress and transcendence minimizes structural racism and effaces contemporary realities of discrimination and dehumanization based on color/race facing Afro-descendants. It ignores how post-racialism has not led to the transcendence of race, but rather a reinforcement of a racial caste system (Hernández, 2012).

As strategy of power, post-racial politics insulate mixture and racial democracy from critiques of the centrality of race to their unequal formation and outcomes. Post-racial thinking confounds the ideal of anti- or non-racialism with an active, transformative anti-racism, while drawing on sentiments that 'we are all mixed, [therefore] we are not racist' to assert that Brazilians have gotten past racial difference as a category of inclusion/exclusion. Post-racial politics also continue the historical trajectory of efforts to delimit the acceptability and legitimacy of discourses arguing for racial equality and justice. In contesting their own discrimination and oppression, politicized blacks (and their allies) become threats to post-racial Brazilianness and obstacles to a non-racial universal equality.

As sociologist Antonio Sergio Guimarães (2001) has argued, we should consider post-racialism itself as a racist ideology to the degree that it denies the significance of race in ways that diminish, cover up, or naturalize white supremacy and a highly racialized structure of power. I believe we should also consider it a form of identity politics (whether intentional or not) reflecting the white status/privilege and sense of belonging that appears as the undifferentiated, universal desire of an entire population. At the same time, we must continue to contest the failure of post-racial ideology to account for the different ways people experience, invest in, or affirm mixture and racial democracy. This would bring to light how post-racial thinking neglects the effects of antiblackness on the socio-economic, psychological, and biological well-being of

Afro-descendants as those who bear the heaviest consequences of being told to wait for mixture to work its way through to transcendence.

Critical examination of the Brazilian post-racial brings it into focus as one manifestation of a broader, interconnected post-racial and multicultural moment in the Americas. If racism, white supremacy, and antiblackness together constitute a hemispheric question, as I believe they do, then we must mount transnational and interdisciplinary theoretical, epistemological, and practical strategies to deconstruct and challenge the ways post-racial ideologies rearticulate racial hierarchy and subordination to impede justice and transformative change.

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Notes

1. In my analysis, the first four ideas are composites drawn specifically from work on the United States (Cho, 2009; Bonilla-Silva, 2010) and Brazil (Guimarães, 1995, 2001), and I maintain Sumi Cho's (2009) terminology. The hyperconsciousness/negation of race dialectic was developed in relation to the Brazilian context by João H. Costa Vargas (2004).
2. While for the US case, Sumi Cho argues that post-racialism 'signals a racially transcendent *event* that authorizes the retreat from race' (2009: 1597–8, emphasis added), for Brazil, as discussed here, it was more a set of processes and ideas that marked a 'moment' of transcendence embodied in the positive reconceptualization of racial mixture.
3. For examinations of race within questions of national identity in 20th-century Brazil, see Davis (1999); Moura (1988); do Nascimento (1989); Skidmore (1993).
4. For comprehensive analyses of Afro-descendants and racial inequality in Brazil, see for example Hernández (2011, 2012) and Telles (2004).
5. See Racusen (2004) for a similar observation about the doctrine of racial democracy as self-perpetuating within institutions of the legal system.
6. In contrast, current findings suggest that race would influence the effects of universal policies in ways that delimit the degree of social inclusion and equality of Afro-descendants vis-à-vis whites. For example, the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), Brazil's Census Bureau, concluded that, given the persistent disparities in wages for Afro-descendants with equal years of schooling with whites, 'education cannot be characterized as a sufficient factor for overcoming racial inequalities in income in Brazil' (quoted in Hernández, 2012: 92–3).
7. Following Bailey and Peria (2010), I designate as Anti-Quota Manifesto 2006 and 2008 two highly publicized open letters in opposition to affirmative action submitted to the national congress by various academics, journalists, and other citizens. All translations from the Portuguese in this article are my own.
8. The Statute included diverse initiatives, from using racial categorization and data collection to measure equality in diverse societal spheres (e.g. health, education, employment), to quotas for Afro-descendents in the media, government contracts, and other segments of the labor market.
9. During the writing of this article, mass protests for better public services (transportation, education, health), against corruption, and against the millions of Brazilian Reais misspent on the World Cup and Olympics are happening throughout Brazil. The large protests were catalyzed in part by outrage at the excessive use of force by the São Paulo Military Police against a crowd of protestors in the City of São Paulo demanding reduction in transport fees. Much was made of the excessive violence, as members of the media were also targeted and the crowd seemed composed primarily of middle-class youth and students. Yet, this type of indiscriminate violence and wrath of the police (i.e. the state) is routine in the poor, predominantly black communities of the *periferias* of Brazil's cities. Activists and scholars often describe such violence as *genocídio* (genocide) to mark its anti-black and systemic nature. The Rede

Nacional da Juventude Negra (National Network of Black Youth) were quick to juxtapose public indignation around violent response to the protests with the ongoing indifference of the public and media to systematic violence against Afro-descendants. 'Why do rubber bullets on white skin move people more than the real bullets that kill the black population daily?' (Rede Nacional da Juventude Negra, 2013).

10. *Contra* Gilroy (2000), rather than fascist tendencies emerging from an identity politics involving racial absolutism, in this case the defense of mixture and non-racial universalism express fascist tendencies that silence diverse experiences in ways that are bound up with elite concerns for order and social stability in a highly stratified society.
11. This non-performativity differs in degree from Brazilians' simultaneous acknowledgement that racism exists, but denial that they themselves are racist. By admitting racism exists, one sees it as an issue to be addressed. Yet one can still exculpate oneself from complicity and avoid examining one's own beliefs and behaviors.
12. Similar to Tanya Golash-Boza's (2010) findings for Peru, claims about having a black grandmother (or ancestor) are quite prevalent in Brazil and often used as an example of the lack of racism within oneself, one's own family, and society more generally.

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