

CHAPTER 22

State Agenda and Public Policy Against Racism (1959-2008)

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Abstract: The first argument of this paper is that the Cuban State's agenda and policies against racism could be divided in two periods 1959-85 and 1985-present. During the period of 1959-85 both the agenda and the policies of the State were focussed on the elimination of the structural dimension of social inequality in Cuba. Racial discrimination, in this context, was not perceived as an independent variable that deserved focused attention, but a dependent variable emanating from a society divided into classes that would be properly handled through the implementation of a classless society. On the other hand, the period from 1985-present is characterized by the recognition of the persistence of social inequalities in Cuba where racial inequalities are the most salient in the State's point of view. Unlike the preceding period, in the last twenty years the State has started considering racial discrimination as an independent variable that deserved focused attention. In that regard some preliminary actions have been taken in order to create racism oriented policies. The second issue that will be discussed in this paper includes the new official approach to racial issues in which the Cuban socialist State faces two main challenges. Firstly, the State should move from the phase of identification and definition of racism as a public problem to a phase of design and implementation of policies. Secondly, the issue of racism needs to become a State priority.

Introduction

In 1959, the Cuban revolutionary government had as a project the creation of an egalitarian society where all social groups (independently of race, gender, age, social class, etc.) could have equal welfare levels and equal access to public goods and services (health, education, housing and employment). In order to achieve this goal, the state implemented social policies focused on eliminating the structural dimension of social inequality. Three years later (1962), the Cuban state considered that these social policies had achieved their goals and that all phenomena linked to inequality, such as racism, class differences and gender discrimination, should be considered eradicated.

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Since approximately twenty years ago (1985-present), the Cuban government has been increasingly recognizing that racial inequalities are still alive in Cuba in areas such as the State decision making positions, access to labor, quality of life and social mobility. This recognition worked as a departure point to include, in the state's agenda, the social concern facing the existence of racial inequalities. Particularly the State has considered necessary to analyze the impact that the persistence of inequalities based on race is having upon the political, economic and social structure of the socialist regime.

The main purpose of this reflection is to analyze the past, present and future of the public agenda and the policies of the Cuban Socialist State in regard to racism in Cuba. The following questions guide this paper: What have been the particularities of the Cuban Socialist State's agenda and policies in relation to racism? What challenges related to racism will the Cuban socialist state face in the future?

The first argument of this paper is that the Cuban state's agenda and policies against racism could be divided in two moments 1959-85 and 1985-present. During the period 1959-85 both the agenda and the policies of the State's main goal was the elimination of the structural dimension of social inequality in Cuba. Racial discrimination, in this context, was not perceived as an independent variable that deserved focalized attention but as a dependent variable emanated from a society divided into classes that would be properly handled through the implementation of classless society. On the other hand, the period 1985-present has been characterized by the progressive recognition of the persistence of social inequalities in Cuba, being racial inequalities the most salient in the state's point of view. Unlike the preceding period, in the last twenty years the state has started considering racial discrimination as an independent variable that deserved focalized attention. In that regard some preliminary actions have been taken in order to create racism oriented policies.

The second argument defended in this paper is that taking into account the new official approach to racial issues, the Cuban socialist State faces two main challenges. First, the policy addressing racial issues should move from the phase of identification and definition of racism as a public problem to the phases of design and implementation of policies. Second, in order to ensure the efficacy of racism oriented policies it is necessary that the issue of racism become a state priority.

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In developing these arguments, this paper is structured in three parts. The first one provides a historical background of Cuban state policies regarding racism in the period 1959-1985. The second part, offers a similar approach this time to the period 1985-present. Finally, the last part of this paper evaluates the racism-related challenges that the state will face in the future.¹

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The principal singularity of the state agenda during this period is that despite it was not in any regard racism oriented, it had an important impact upon racial dynamics. The Cuban Revolution began in the first days of January 1959. Just two months later, the leader of the Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, affirmed its commitment to facing and solving the problem of racism in Cuba (Serviat, 1986; Sawyer, 2006; Morales Dominguez, 2007). Tacitly the revolutionary State would work with two meanings of racism as social problem. On the one hand, racism was understood as a system of exclusion, based on race, that limits or prevents equality and social rights of certain racial groups (e.g. education, medical attention, work, housing, and recreation). In that sense, a practice, a behavior, an action could be labeled as racist only when it manifests itself as visible act of racial discriminatory practices, specifically when it was related to limitation to rights, access to goods, services, and opportunities. In short, the State understood racism as acts of open discrimination. (Serviat, 1986) On the other hand, racism was defined as an ideological manifestation of a society divided by class. As an ideology, racism's main social function is to justify the relationships of domination and subordination that are established among social groups of different phenotypes and cultures (Serviat, 1986).

1. In this essay, I only focus on the state, its agenda, and its policies. This decision is based on the fact that the Cuban state is the principal actor, if not the only actor, with influence in the public sector. This is fundamental to this analysis given that the public nature of racism as a problem will lead to an inquiry on other aspects such as the participation of citizens and other political actors (political parties, for example) in processes associated with the formation of the agenda, design, and evaluation of public policy. To clearly understand these characteristics of Cuban public life saves us from these inquiries and gives us the institutional framework to conduct this analysis.

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Coupled with the definition of racism as a social problem, Cuban state defined an outline of its solution. In perceiving racism as a super-structural emanation, the state considered that racism could be eliminated with the arrangement of a new type of society: an egalitarian one. Given that the society divided by class is the source of exclusion or discrimination of certain racial groups, the marginalized groups could gain equality through the elimination of this type of society. Consequently, the focus of state attention was on the elimination of the structural order that caused racism as a discriminatory practice (Serviat, 1986).

As a complementary strategy in order to enforce the consolidation of an egalitarian social arrangement, the state considered pertinent to take three measures. The first one was the implementation of an official ideology of color, gender and class blindness; the second one was the establishment of the principle of revolutionary merit and ideological compromise with the political project of the Revolution as principal criteria to determine the social worth of individuals and to manage their access to social mobility; finally, the third measure was the implementation of a sort of State's transcendental model of ethnicity: the revolutionary culture.

The eradication of all racial bias through an official ideology of color, gender and class blindness was based on the idea that public treatment of individuals should not consider any racial typology, gender or socioeconomic origin. The goal was to create a society that treats everyone equally, in which race, gender and socioeconomic origin becomes an irrelevant piece of information. In accordance with the policy of color, gender and class blindness, the state required the existence of a society whose legal framework safeguard equal treatment for all individuals in terms of basic rights and economic, political, and social opportunities. As a complementary measure, the state should give priority to an equitable distribution policy that allows individuals equal access to basic goods and services. Finally, any public act that promoted racism, gender discrimination or socioeconomic exclusion should be considered punishable.

The second pillar of the government's agenda against social inequalities was the establishment of principles of revolutionary merit and ideological compromise with the Revolution as criteria for evaluating the social worth of individuals and guaranteeing their social mobility. The government would define revolutionary merit as the contribution (produc-

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tive, intellectual, and patriotic) that individuals make to the revolutionary project of society. In accordance with this definition, the government identified social contribution, educational training, and the ideological compromise (and not socioeconomic origin, race or gender) as the only factors to determine positions in the social hierarchy and to establish the assignment of resources in society. On the other hand, the ideological commitment would mean the unconditional submission of the revolutionary subjects to the political principles of the Revolution as a social project.

The last point in the State agenda was the set up of a homogenized and monolithic social culture: the revolutionary culture, a peculiar combination of some ideals and principles from Enlightenment and Marxism, and a secularized version of the Christian axiology. In that sense, it was important to the state to include in the agenda the socialization of individuals in the revolutionary culture. Through this, the state sought to construct an inclusive and encompassing model that make possible the homogenization of lifestyles, cognitive foundations, basic assumptions of action, and moral principles. In short, through the implementation of the revolutionary culture the state sought to form an undifferentiated, monolithic (de-racialized, classless, gender neutral) cultural subject.

Early in the administration (1959-1962) the Revolution leaders began to make decisions that, even though not focused on solving the racial problem, their purposes had a positive impact in the previously excluded racial groups (De la Fuente, 1995; 1998). As a first step, the government made any form of discrimination punishable by law in the Fundamental Law of the Republic in 1959 (Serviat, 1986). Furthermore, the new government gave priority to socioeconomic changes that eliminated the barriers to access of basic services, such as education, health, housing, and employment (Casal, 1979).

Fundamentally, the changes consisted of nationalizing the educational system, sanitary system, the labor market, and the distribution of goods and services. With these reforms came to birth a system blind to class, gender and race. The state based its criteria on the idea that equal opportunity for excluded groups could only be achieved when these groups could reach the same levels of education, labor, sanitation, and well-being as those that had always been favored due to class privileges.

On the other hand, the progressive consolidation of the socialist regime as an operative and uncontested project of nation brought the closure of institutional routes for the legal existence of alternative political actors. This led to the radicalization of tensions between the new group in power and the dissident actors inside and outside of Cuba. As a strategic resource, the state decided to convoke to the unification of all political and social forces that shared “similar” political agendas as a way to protect the new regime (De la Fuente, 2005; Caño, 1996).

Before the Revolution, many different societies and clubs whose membership was segregated by color of skin or income level existed (Montejo, 2004). The principle of “national unity” was a decisive element in the disappearance of these societies and clubs. On the one hand, the form in which the new government perceived the racism as a public problem was not compatible with the existence of racially-differentiated organizations with disaggregated and independent social and political agendas. From the state’s perspective, these social groups were only one component of the disjoint that hindered the solution to the racial problem. They only obstructed the state anti-racism agenda through the creation of biased and divergent agendas focused on particular interests (Morales Dominguez, 2007). Another aspect that influenced the disappearance of these societies and clubs was the fact that a large number of the demands that had been requested in the fight against the racial discrimination had been satisfied with the measures taken by the new government (Montejo, 2004).

In addition, the color blindness policy of the state would label any race-oriented claim as an act of racism. Demands such as self-determination, more opportunities for greater power and compensatory measures articulated by any racial group were considered as threats to the national unity, because they implied a potential incitation to undermine the racial egalitarianism. In order to enforce its color blindness policy, the state legally persecuted and punished any kind of race-oriented practices (Sawyer, 2006; Morales Dominguez, 2007).

The state solution to the closure and disappearance of race oriented societies and clubs was the implementation of a colorblind policy in regard to the access of every individual to the Socialist political system and its formal structures of leadership. In the early phases of the Revolution, social and public organizations adapted to the principle of being anti-

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segregationist, which was an explicit invitation for the acceptance of any individual, without taking into account her/his race, into the political realm: the communist party, the army, the government, and the organizations of public representation (Caño, 1996). This entire outline of assimilation was complemented with the implementation of the principles of revolutionary merit and political compromise with the Revolution as exclusive criteria for the inclusion of any individual, independently of her/his race, in positions of political and administrative leadership.

Also during this period, one of the most important State priorities was the set up of a monolithic revolutionary culture. As previously mentioned, this revolutionary culture was a very peculiar combination of some ideals and principles from Enlightenment and Marxism, and a secularized version of the Christian axiology. Through this transcendental ethnicity the state institutionalized a single and legitimate vision of the world, spiritually andgnoseologically speaking, and created a number of principles for-validating social behavior.² It also created the basis to the formation of an undifferentiated and monolithic cultural subject: the revolutionary man.

Such a transcendental culture worked as a referent from where to deal with the multiethnic design of the nation. The state considered that the different ethnic sources that were part of the national cultural heritage should be tolerated and supported so long as they do not contradict or contravene the revolutionary culture. This belief created two policies. On the one hand, in order to guarantee the preeminence of the revolutionary cultural model, the plural sources of Cuban culture were reduced to its most innocuous manifestation, which means they should be treated as folklore. On the other hand any alternative lifestyles, customs, world-views, and moral principles were placed under surveillance and in cases of open confrontation against the mainstream revolutionary culture they were legally penalized and persecuted. Probably the most salient examples of these policies were the reduction of the Afro-Cuban cultural heritage to a folkloristic status, the proscription and persecution of every cultural manifestation of religiosity and the criminalization of social prac-

2. In the implementation of this policy the educative system, the media, and the corporative mass organizations played an important role, being the channels of socialization and diffusion of the revolutionary culture.

tices that, labeled as deviant, did not fit into the core principles of the revolutionary culture (Morales Dominguez, 2007; Swayer, Mark Q., 2006).³

In the 1970s, the Constitution of the Cuban Socialist State was issued. This constitution legally reaffirmed the principal norms related to discrimination. First, it delineated the equality of the rights of all citizens and it subjected citizens to the same obligations. Second, the constitution made specific reference to the state refusal to discriminate in regards to race, color, gender, or national origin. Third, the state granted individual rights to all Cubans such as the opportunity to enter into the political system, the government, and the labor sector based solely on personal merit and abilities; mobility in the Armed Forces; access to the equal salary for equal work; access to teaching, medical assistance, housing; attention in public service establishments; and the enjoyment of recreation (Serviat, 1986; Constitución, 1999).

In this same decade, the Cuban state institutionalized atheism as official state position toward spiritual, moral and cognitive beliefs and practices. This reaffirmed the foundations to maintain a restrictive policy towards religious practices and to consolidate the culturally homogenous system.⁴ Besides this state atheism reinforced the legitimization of a single model of cognitive, spiritual and epistemological construction of reality, materialized this time in the historical and dialectical materialism perspective.

As a consequence of all those measures, during the first twenty-five years of the Revolution, the institutional dimension of discrimination was

3. During the last years of the 60s and during the 70s there was a severe process of persecution and criminalization of the Afro-Cuban religions (Swayer, 2006). Also the state implemented legal measures in order to enforce the assimilation of the revolutionary culture, such as the Law on Loafing that played both a preventive and a punitive role to control deviance.

4. The institutionalization of atheism brought with it the establishment of a set of non written restrictions to religious people: the restriction of membership in the Communist Party, the limitation of their access to decision making positions in the government, the denial of access to social political organizations, and the imposition of restrictions on their access to higher levels of the educative system. All of these non written restrictions excluded religious people from the process of social mobility and access to the political realm, and as a consequence created incentives to silence and hide non-mainstream identities and beliefs.

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considerably reduced. The preliminary results led the state to declare that Cuba had eradicated racial discrimination (De la Fuente, 2001; Serviat, 1986).

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In 1985, at the Third Communist Party Congress, the institutional space where the Cuban State defines its politic, economic and social agenda, Fidel and Raúl Castro made speeches in which they recognized that racism still persisted in Cuba. (de la Fuente, 1998; Morales Dominguez, 2007) Particularly they identified the problem in regard to the underrepresentation of Afro-descendants in major positions in the political system. For the first time in the Cuban Revolution period, it was recognized that an egalitarian legal framework based on colorblind principles had not been enough to eliminate the long term effects of racial inequalities.

With the disappearance of the Communist block at the beginning of the 1990s, Cuba experienced an extreme economic and political crisis. To address this situation, the state saw it necessary to redefine some of its ideological and structural foundations. The economic lull produced the weakening of the citizen consensus favoring the state political project. In light of this, the state decided to implement some modifications in the political realm.

The principal project was to move to a more inclusive political model, more flexible in the way of defining ideas such as revolutionary merit and ideological commitment. In addition, the ideological foundations of the revolutionary culture was redefined, acquiring a more nationalist fashion and a less Marxist orthodox content. The state sought to move from a model focused on the homogenization of lifestyles, cognitive foundations, basic assumptions of action, and moral principles to a heterogeneous one. In short, the state modified the very foundations of what meant to be a revolutionary subject, in order to enhance the amount of potential supporters to the endangered Revolution.

On the other hand, the crisis had a negative impact over the political and ideological basis of the socialist regime. Facing the economic juncture, the state used market as a complementary mechanism of regulation of the national economy. This decision brought back to Cuba some of the

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characteristics of a market society, such as social stratification in accordance with market regulation and the presence of social inequalities in consumption and quality of life.

This new social reality allowed individuals with better social networks in the labor sphere and with better links to the Cuban community abroad (within which whites were the absolute majority) to have better conditions to face the critical situation (De la Fuente, 2001; Swayer, 2006; Morales Dominguez, 2007). The economic crisis revealed that those groups that historically occupied the lowest levels in the society still continued in this position. Particularly, in the case of the Afro-Cubans, the crisis exposed that they were underrepresented in the best-paid jobs, which translated into a lowest quality of life. It was also visible that they experience more difficulty being hired in more lucrative jobs (and therefore those with more social prestige), such as those related to the tourist sector and state firms in charge of managing businesses with foreign capital (De la Fuente, 2001).⁵

On a visible level, the new reality put the two pillars of the state anti-inequality agenda into crisis: the color, gender and class blindness principle and the principle of revolutionary merit and ideological compromise with the regime as criteria to evaluate the social worth of individuals and to guarantee their social mobility. In 1998, at the Fifth National Congress of the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba, Fidel Castro made public his interest in including in the state agenda the social concern facing the existence of racial biases in the labor sphere that were impacting social mobility. This interest was reaffirmed five years later in the congress *Pedagogia 2003*, and in 2004, in the 8th Congress of the Communist Youth. (Morales Dominguez, 2007).

Following the same position stated in 1985, the state recognized that even when the measures it had implemented have contributed to a higher level of racial equality in Cuba, its achievements fell short of being optimal. The principal outcome of this process of “awareness” would be the progressive modification in the way of dealing with racial issues.⁶ The

5. The principal reasons cited were the “lower” level of civil and scholarly education and the problems associated with the “low level” of “suitability in physical appearance” to perform certain social roles (De la Fuente, 2001).

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first change the state agenda dealing with racial inequalities experienced was in the way of perceiving racism. (Morales Dominguez, 2007)

Previously, the state perceived a close relation between racism and the societies divided into class, identifying the former as a consequence of the latter. This definition interpreted racism as a phenomenon that lacks of an independent institutional foundation made of long term internalized values and practices. It also overlooked that a “classless” society could be a racialized society. Facing the fact that in a classless society racism could persist, the state was in some regard forced to amend this point of view. The first shift was recognizing racism as an autonomous phenomenon that could survive beyond its historical context of origin. The second modification was acknowledging that racism was not a static phenomenon, but it could transform itself according to the particularities of a new context, with new discursive and practical resources and new strategies of justification (Morales Dominguez, 2007).

The third change was in the understanding of racism solely as acts of open discrimination, which means that it only existed when it manifests itself as visible behavior in discriminatory practices, specifically in limitation to rights and access to goods, services and opportunities. The state would start paying attention to indirect racism and hidden discrimination. These elements would include deep-rooted systems of beliefs, shared values, socialization that is carried out in private spaces, and the racist beliefs that penetrate public space without converting into open demonstrations of the limitation of rights and access to goods, services, and opportunities. (Morales Dominguez, 2007).

Coupled with the redefinition of racism as a social problem, the Cuban state started a progressive modification of the outline of its solution. This new outline would be complemented by some non-racism oriented policies that will be commented in the next section. In perceiving racism as an autonomous phenomenon that could survive beyond its historical context of origin, the state tacitly recognized that racism should receive a focalized attention. The establishment of a society based on the principle of color blindness had meant the creation of a society based on

6. This process of “awareness” started explicitly in 1998 at the Fifth National Congress of the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba. However its consolidation took place after 2003.

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the right to equal treatment for all individuals. However, it was visible that the implementation of equal treatment without truly equal conditions had contributed to the preservation of inequality among individuals of different racial groups. The state acknowledged that in a society that had inherited profound differences in education, economy, and channels of identity formation, there is an inequality of origin that can hardly be repaired voluntarily without an explicit aid from the state. (Morales Dominguez, 2007).

During this period, the Cuban state issued both racism oriented and non-racism oriented policies that had an impact upon racial dynamics. The first policy was enunciated in the 80s. In 1985-86, as a decision made in the Third Communist Party Congress, the state considered pertinent to design an affirmative action that guarantee a proportional numerical participation of Afro-descendants in positions of political and administrative leadership. This policy was not fully and systematically implemented, taking into account that at the beginning of the 90s the state had to redefine its political priorities as a consequence of the deep economic and political crisis that Cuba got into during that decade (Sawyer, 2006; Morales Dominguez, 2007).

At the beginning of the 90s the Cuban state implemented some non-racism oriented policies that had an important impact in racial dynamics in Cuba. One of the first changes in facing the political and economic crisis was the substitution of state atheism for state secularism. This new status softened both the penalization and persecution of alternative lifestyles, customs, worldviews, and moral principles. In addition it legalized the free public choice of beliefs and gave legal coverage to the existence of certain expressions of cultural pluralism. Only the open confrontations against a more relaxed and less restrictive mainstream revolutionary culture remained under surveillance and legally penalized and persecuted. The substitution of state atheism for state secularism also eliminated the institutional barriers that had excluded religious people from the state benefits (educational mobility, politic mobility, and job access) and the state profit system. It derogated the imposition of restrictions on their access to the higher levels of the educative system.

At the same time, in 1992, the state gave its consent to the acceptance of religious people in the Communist Party. This opened an institutional door to their political mobility and derogated the limitations to their

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access to decision making positions in the government. As a corollary at the beginning of the first decade of this century, as a decision without historical precedents, the state granted recognition of black religious organizations (Abakuas, Cultural Association Yoruba) as civil associations. It eliminated the official public stigma over Afro-Cuban religions and allowed them to reach public status.

In regard to the racism oriented actions the state's main point has been defining the factual singularities of racism as public problem in order to design a social policy. On the one hand the state considered pertinent to explore the problem of emerging inequalities (political, economic, and social), taking race as one of the main variables, in order to measure its social impact and to design a social policy to fight against it. The state's priority in that regard would be to define the relationship between racial inequality and job access, level of income, quality of life and access to decision making positions in the political and economic spheres.⁷ On the other hand, the state also promoted researches focused on analyzing the persistence of racial prejudice in the population.⁸ In this case its main interest is to explore the role that the public models of socialization used by the media and the educational system were playing in the reproduction of racial prejudices and racist representations. Finally, the state authorized studies focused on recovering the multiraciality and multiethnicity as elements of national identity, and also making visible the role of the different racial groups in the nation formation (Arandia 2005; Morales Dominguez, 2007).

This process of exploration and definition of the factual singularities of racism as a social problem has been conducted from three state institu-

7. Since 2002, the Anthropology Center (CITMA) has been researching issues of social marginality and social mobility that have included race as a variable of analysis. Also Catauro the Fernando Ortiz Foundation's journal has been publishing articles related to the topic of marginality and race. In 2007 the publisher Fuente Viva, published Esteban Morales Dominguez's book *Desafios de la problematica racial en Cuba*, a book that explicitly presents a critical approach to the racial politics in revolutionary Cuba.

8. There are a number of examples in that sense. In 1996 the official journal *Temas* published a group of articles focused on race and racism in Cuba (*Temas*, No. 7, July-September 1996). In 2001 was published "The Black and Social Representation" a research that has being awarded in the national essay contest "Pinos nuevos". In 2005, magazine *La gaceta de Cuba* (January-February 2005) was totally focused on the topic of race and racism.

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tions: the Anthropology Center (CITMA), the Fernando Ortiz Foundation and the Economy Institute. In addition, the project “Color Cubano” (Cuban Color), that belongs to the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba, works as a space for discussing racist manifestations that affect the principle of racial equality in regard to access to social goods and services; to recover the multiraciality as an element of national identity; to make visible the role of the Afro-Cuban population in the nation formation; and to analyze the role of mass media and educational system socialization and education sources in regard to the formation of racial prejudices. (Arandia, 2005) This project gathers academics in the social sciences, historians, actors and community activists.

The principal outcome of this policy has been the creation of data bases that have gathered statistical information about racial distribution in job access, level of income, quality of life, marginality levels and access to decision making positions in the political and economic spheres (Morales Dominguez, 2007). The project Color Cubano, on the other hand, has been organizing forums, seminars and book presentations related to the goal of making visible the role of the Afro-Cuban population in the nation formation.⁹ This project has been, also, giving public recognition to Afro-Cuban intellectuals and politicians making visible their contribution to the national history.¹⁰

Challenges

The new official approach to racial issues of the Cuban socialist State faces two main challenges. First, the actions against racism should move from the phase of identification and definition of racism as a public problem to the next phases of design and implementation of policies. Second, in order to ensure the efficacy of a race oriented policy it is necessary that the issue of racism become a state priority.

As discussed before, the current race oriented policies of the state are in a preliminary phase, which means in the moment of gathering informa-

9. <http://www.lacult.org/noticias/showitem.php?lg=1&id=516>; http://www.lajiribilla.cu/2003/n095_03/095_06.html;

10. <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2008/02/06/cultura/artic11.html>; <http://www.cuba-travel.us/dtc/shownews.aspx?c=24776&lng=1>

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tion and defining the problem, its characteristics and impact, in order to design a social policy. The first challenge that the state should face is precisely to proceed to design the policy and implement it.

The design and implementation of a race oriented policy should remove the obstacles that cause groups to remain economically, educationally, politically, and socially unequal and also the social order of social validation that is blind to previous disadvantages. This removal implies the design and implementation of compensatory measures and should be coupled by changes in the legal framework and the implementation of a new institutional arrangement. It is necessary to modify the colorblind legal system in order to design a new one that recognize and, more important, to legalize positive differentiated treatment to disadvantaged racial groups. This new legal framework should identify some racial groups as moral minorities whose undeserved disadvantages convert them into a vulnerable group that requires special state support. In addition, the implementation of compensatory measures demands the modification of the current colorblind current state institutions and their conversion in racially proactive ones. These institutions should be able of operating with positive measures to reverse the effects of the accumulated racial disadvantages.

The second challenge that the new official approach should face is to ensure that the both the design and the implementation of race oriented policies become a state priority. It depends on how the state manages its agenda of high priority issues. Cuba is getting in a transitional moment, where the state demands to promote macro social changes in a controlled political environment (political themes, social problems, social demands and possible reforms). In this condition it seems logical to think that the state will try to reduce the amount of issues that it should pay attention to. At the same time this transitional moment demands that the state enhance its legitimacy basis. Designing and implementing racism oriented policies could work as a mechanism of reaching social support, at least from the racial groups that will receive the benefit of such policies.

It has been a common place in Cuban revolutionary history that racial issues have been used strategically in accordance to the political circumstances. In some contexts of crisis or transition the racial issues have been delayed or literally expelled from the state priority list. Both the period 1962-1985 and the first five years of the 90s are examples of this. Also in

other moments of state transition, such as the first two years of the revolution and the last ten years, the racial issues have reached visibility as a theme of political importance. The exclusion or inclusion of racial issues in the state agenda has been related to the perception of its dichotomist meaning on the one hand, as source of social division and on the other hand, as a source of legitimacy. Taking this into account, the challenge is to enforce the meaning of racial issues as a matter of legitimacy in order to ensure its inclusion in the high priority list of the state.

Conclusions

This paper analyzed the role that the agenda and the policies of the Cuban Socialist state have placed in combating racism in Cuba. It was evidenced that the Cuban state's agenda and policies against racism could be divided in two moments: 1959-85 and 1985-present. During the period 1959-85 both the agenda and the policies of the State that had an impact upon racial issues were not race oriented. The main goal of state policies was the elimination of the structural dimension of social inequality in Cuba. The period 1985-present has been characterized by the progressive recognition of the persistence of social inequalities in Cuba, being racial inequalities the most salient in the state's point of view. Unlike the precedent period, in the last twenty years some preliminary state actions have been taken in order to create a racism oriented policies.

In its second section, this paper explored the two challenges the Cuban socialist State should face, in regard its new official approach to racial issues. The first challenge is to move from a phase of identification and definition of racism as a public problem to the phases of design and implementation of policies against racism. The second challenge that the new official approach should face is to ensure that the both the design and the implementation of race oriented policies become state priorities.

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