Black Identity Formation and the Civil Rights in Brazil

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: *racial identity,* *civil rights,* *colonization,* *racism,* *Brazil*	This paper aims to establish an association between black racial identity formation and the struggle to guarantee blacks' civil rights in Brazil. The consolidation of racial identity is a determining factor for the subject to become an active social agent, able to enjoy all their rights as a citizen. The introduction contextualizes matters involving identity formation in the colonial and imperial periods. Next, we examine the construction and consolidation of black identity from the legal Abolition of slavery until the contemporary advances in the conquest of rights in Brazil. Finally, we observe that the consolidation of racial identity is directly linked to the organization and strengthening of the Black Brazilian Movement.

1. Introduction

In the last decades, several authors have analyzed the transformations in modern identities as a consequence of broad social and cultural changes (Hall, 2014, 2016; Giddens, 1991, among others). Changes in how humans understand themselves and others over time result from specific historical processes, such as production regimes, technological changes, family forms, and culture. In this way, it is understood that identities are linked to specific social and material conditions and that the symbolic markings of differences have real effects, as they define what is included and what is excluded from an identity. Personal identification processes are always relational; they happen through the symbolic marking of differences related to other identifications (Woodward, 2014; Hall, 2014). Again, each of us has a collective identity series for groups with which we share specific characteristics (Taylor & Usborne, 2010).
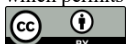
Social and group relations play an essential role in identifying each person, and how these relationships are based influence one's own recognition and identity (or identities). In elementary terms, we can define society as a group of people who live together under laws established by the State. Besides this set of laws, the social relations between individuals also formed societies. Social relations are formed over time through the construction of shared representations, images, signs, meanings, and definitions; that is, culture mediates the interrelationships: "It is the participants in a culture who give meaning to individuals, objects, and events. Things 'in themselves' rarely - perhaps never - have a single, fixed, unalterable

meaning." (Hall, 2016, p.20)[1]. Consequently, social and cultural representations and symbologies directly affect how each person in that space sees the other and how they are seen (hooks, 2019). According to Fanon (2018):

> Man is human only to the extent that he wants to impose himself on another man to be recognized. As long as he is not effectively recognized by the other, this other remains the subject of his action; the value and human reality depend on the recognition of this other. (p. 180)

We can assume then that from the recognition, it is possible to identify specific characteristics in ourselves; whether natural or attributed or deposited by society, making it possible to identify ourselves with each other, forming what we call identity, where identity is grounded through the interaction we create with each other (Fernandes & Souza, 2016).

Reflecting on these social relations and their unfolding is essential for understanding social and racial relations in Brazil. Keeping this in mind when it comes to black subjects is fundamental because it is possible to observe how the aggression caused by racism can affect the subject's total development and awareness of the struggle for civil and political rights. Civil rights define that is fundamental to life, liberty, property, and equality before the law. They are what guarantee civilized relations between people and the very existence of the civil society that arose with the development of capitalism, and their touchstone is individual freedom. Political rights are the possibility that gives legitimacy to the political organization of society, and social rights are rights to education, health, or fair pay, allowing political organization and minimizing inequalities (Carvalho, 2002).

Brazil was the place that received the most significant number of Africans enslaved in the transatlantic trade, from 3 to 5 million people. The country now has the largest black population outside Africa and has 54% of the self-declared black population (considering that the category *negros* [black people] includes *pretos* and *pardos*, that is, black and brown or mixed race people) (IBGE, 2020).

Nonetheless, prejudice, discrimination, and racism are part of the daily life of the black population in a country with many social inequalities between whites and blacks. Even today, it is common to hear in Brazil that "you are an intelligent black man" or even "you are black, but you have beautiful features." It is like reinforcing that desirable characteristics (intelligence or beauty) exist despite the blackness found in that person. In this way, strengthening black racial identity can provide emotional and cognitive resources for the person to perceive that these observations manifest prejudices and to be able to face them more effectively, personally and socially.

In this way, our paper aims to establish an association between black racial identity formation and the struggle to guarantee blacks' civil rights in Brazil. We argue that consolidation of a racial identity is a determining factor for the subject to become an active social agent, able to enjoy all their rights as a citizen. In the introduction, we contextualize matters involving racial identity formation since the colonial and imperial periods. Next, we examine the construction and consolidation of black identity from the legal Abolition of slavery until the contemporary advances in the conquest of rights in Brazil. Finally, we observe that the consolidation of racial identity is directly linked to the organization and strengthening of the Black Brazilian Movement.

In our work, we focus on the concept of collective racial identification as an engine of political mobilization for black people, that is, as a self-attributed collective identity for social change

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[1] All translations from Portuguese to English are ours.

(Munanga, 2012). Likewise, a caveat is in order: here, we use the notion of race as a nominalist concept, something that does not exist in biological terms but has a real effect (Mbembe, 2018a), that is, "race as biology is fiction, racism as a social problem is real" (Smedley & Smedley, 2005, p. 16)

2. Colonization, Slavery, and Ideology Of Race

In colonized countries, the exercise of subjectivity and social identity formation of enslaved peoples was strongly affected by slavery policies and practices. It is common knowledge how the colonizers viewed enslaved people and native communities and what has been influenced by theories of racialization. These people had the status of things or means of production.

 The idea of a human being is a recent concept, beginning in Modernity in the 15th century. This transition between "man" and "human being" could be explained by many authors who have been influenced by European Renaissance and their ideas about other cultural systems that were not supposedly developed as well as Western Europe. Furthermore, the other ways of being man beyond Europe were considered "less human" (Mignolo, 2009).

By removing the recognition of "human being" and rational being based on theories of scientific or biological racism, the black subject was reduced only to a body that was at the service of the property to which he belonged. That is, he was considered just a commodity or even part of the capital of that lord (Maringoni, 2011).

Several accounts indicate that enslaved people had their cultural and social identity of origin systematically dismantled and were compelled into oblivion in various ways. This fact seems to have been highly traumatic because, in general terms, the idea of identity makes it possible to understand what an individual's inclinations are, the feeling of belonging to a place and culture, and the ability to practice all the beliefs, recognize the symbologies of that space and live the shared values. (Freitas Junior & Perucelli, 2019).

Thus, it is possible to dimension the unfoldings resulting from the rituals of identity erasure to which black Africans were subjected before being sent to the colonies. Some accounts can be found in literature and also in audiovisual works, such as the documentary Black Atlantic (1998):

> In Uidá, where one of the major slave shipping ports was located, the blacks would travel a 5km route from the city to the port. During this route, every enslaved person that would be shipped was forced to walk around a tree: the tree of oblivion. In this place was the tree of forgetfulness. The enslaved men had to make nine turns around it, and the women, seven. After that, enslaved people were supposed to lose their memory, forget their past, origins, and cultural identity, and become beings without a will to react or rebel. [...] And then they prayed for the enslaved people on the beach that they would have a good trip. (Barbieri, 1998)

The black population, coming from several African countries, had most of its customs, dialects, religiosity, cuisine, rights, and culture that defined its own identity suppressed by slavery's colonial practices. Regarding the origin of the enslaved black population in the Americas, between the 16th and 19th centuries, the majority came from Senegambia (a region between Senegal and Gambia), Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, the Benin Coast, Central Atlantic Africa, and East and South Africa (Eltis & Richardson, 2003). However, we saw the strangulation of such cultural and identity diversity in the colonies. Some reports mention the baptisms performed by the Catholic Church, which already determined new names for individuals characterizing, even more, a domination that removed them from their native identity and their

memories and then imposing on that body a "representational void surrounded by the political-religious authority" (Moreira & Pereti, 2020, p. 287).

 In his essay entitled *Necropolitics*, Mozambican philosopher Achille Mbembe (2018b) defines the condition of a "slave" as being a loss on three levels: loss of a home, loss of rights over one's own body, and loss of one's political status. What was left for blacks sent to the colonies when these premises were denied?

How Smedley e Smedley (2005, p. 19) summarize: "In an era when the dominant political philosophy was equality, civil rights, democracy, justice, and freedom for all human beings, the only way Christians could justify slavery was to demote Africans to nonhuman status". This nonhuman status was strictly linked to the ideology of race, which was fundamental to justify and maintain the enslavement of Africans for four hundred years (Mbembe, 2018a).

From the 16th century on, the sense of race became more evident. With the discoveries by the Europeans, in most cases, for new living things, be they animals, new plant species, or new populations, the need to classify them emerged. However, the problem was not the classification, but the hierarchization, especially of the new populations and their customs, by assigning races to them and seeking scientific justifications for hierarchizing them (Schwarcz,1993; Munanga, 2004).

If before the feeling of belonging was related to political or religious issues, with the bourgeois and mercantile commercial expansion emerged ideas related to what would be considered a universal man, and any culture structured differently from this supposed universality was considered less evolved (Almeida, 2021). With the context of racial subjugation, could the enslaved people be included in this context if, by Mbembe's definition (2018b), a "slave" is a person without a home, without control of his own body and political rights, and his humanity was not guaranteed?

Racism is a penetrating inheritance from colonial times, where it was assumed that some bodies are inferior and carry an intelligence inferior to others. There are many definitions of racism, but the most appropriate for the context of this paper is: "We can say racism is a systematic way of discrimination, having race as a basis, and manifest by conscious or unconscious practices that result in disadvantages or privileges in individuals, depending on the social group they below to" (Almeida, 2021, p. 32).

So, the black population in colonies was included in this system of discrimination based on race and excluded from full participation in society. Furthermore, for approximately four centuries, they were not considered human beings, nor were their human characteristics recognized. How could it have been possible for them to develop a positive racial identity? Both identity and subjectivity were deeply affected by high physical and psychological violence, which resulted in distortions about themselves. In his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon states that "the Negro lives an extraordinarily neurotic ambiguity" (Fanon, 2008, p.162). In other words, he can identify himself with characteristics "destined" for a white man. The feeling becomes, in fact, an utterly dissociative situation. Fanon further summarizes this neurotic circle: "This is what actually happens: as I perceive that the black man is the symbol of sin, I begin to hate him. Yet I realize that I am black." (Fanon, 2008, p. 166).

3. Abolition, Civil Rights, and Marginalization of Black People in Brazil

The formal Abolition of slavery in Brazil took place in May 1888, but this did not mean real freedom for the ex-captives. The same population that contributed to the economic growth of the colony, mainly in the coffee, cotton, and sugar plantations, was marginalized, as Maringoni points out:

> In addition to being discriminated against by their color, the formerly enslaved people added to the poor population and formed the unwanted of the new times, the disinherited of the Republic. The increase in the number of unemployed people, temporary workers, lumpens, beggars, and abandoned children in the streets also resulted in an increase in violence, which can be verified by the more significant space dedicated to the theme in the pages of newspapers. (Maringoni, 2011).

In this period, the Brazilian legislative system, established in the Republic's early years (1889), enacted laws and practices that favored the repression of marginalized classes, mainly composed of the black population. As Bobbio (1987) argues, laws are instruments that govern social relations and establish the formation of a society of equals and unequal, and that society is divided between those who have the power to govern and those who must obey.

Faced with the marginalization of the black population at a cultural, economic, political, and social level, we can say that black people never ceased to be captives. The State and society sought ways to continue exercising this power. Moreover, this becomes evident when we think about how the abolition process happened in Brazil, not as a properly humanitarian idea that aimed to repair the atrocities inflicted on the black population until then. We know that this process was influenced by factors such as pressure from England and its economic interests and also by the fear of Brazilian society with the slave revolts that were becoming more frequent in the colony.

The Brazilian Constitution of 1824 was already discussed the question of citizenship. In article 6, it was foreseen that people born in Brazil and freedmen who had a Brazilian father or mother, and those who were in the service of the Empire were considered Brazilian citizens. However, in article 7, there was the provision of disregarding this citizenship in case of a sentence, and in article 8, the loss of political rights in cases of moral and physical incapacity and prison conviction. In this version of the Brazilian Constitution, it was foreseen who had political rights; such rights existed only for those with proof of certain net annual income in goods, industries, commerce, or paid employment.

It is worth remembering that this Constitution did not mention the legal status of the enslaved, only of the freed. Brazil legally abolished the transatlantic trade in 1831, but it only ended effectively in 1850. Between 1831 and 1850, thousands of Africans entered the country illegally, and this trade was a lucrative business (Fausto, 2022).

Thus, it is possible to affirm that in terms of rights, even if the discussion took place before the Abolition, this did not represent advances for the majority of the enslaved people in the country since this population was frequently criminalized, even if they were considered as citizens, the blacks in that context could not exercise their full political rights, since most of them were still kept as enslaved people. About paid work, with European immigration in the early nineteenth century, most of the positions of this type of work were occupied by this population, basically, because they were white and theoretically better qualified than the black population that already lived in the colony.

The Abolition of slavery did not change the conditions and representation of the black population since no reparatory or inclusive public policies were defined to promote the integration of this portion of the population in society at the time.

Although the abolitionists were concerned about newly freed blacks, this did not result in concrete and immediate action. For example, abolitionist Joaquim Nabuco proposed that landowners be obliged to offer primary education to formerly enslaved people, which legislators rejected at the time. The abolitionists expected that there would be increased access

to education for all social classes and that economic opportunities for black Brazilians would also increase (Maringoni, 2011), but this did not happen.

The Republic's first Constitution (1891) established that everyone was equal before the law, which was just a formal declaration. At the same time, persecution of Afro-Brazilian cultural practices was also a public policy during this period. For example, an 1890 law prohibited "capoeira," a practice with African roots (Decree No. 847, October 11, 1890). In the Republic's first years in Brazil, the sociopolitics projects of exclusion gained strength driven by the ideas of racialization, which justified, in theory, social inequality. During the period, even without segregation laws similar to those of the United States, the black population struggled with spacial discrimination, such as the restrictions in many public locals, such as restaurants, private or public employment, and even did not have full access to education, for example (Dantas, 2016).

In sum, the Brazilian political and legal system was an undeclared way of excluding the black population, which happened for several years after the Abolition of slavery and the proclamation of the Republic. The version of the 1891 Constitution, even though it granted citizenship to foreigners in the country and declared that all were equal before the law, excluded illiterates and beggars. This action, even if not declared racial exclusion, had effects that directly impacted the black population since it was the majority in that situation.

In 1934 the country drafted a new Constitution (1934), and for the first time, equality without distinction of sex, race, social class, or wealth was mentioned in an official government document. In addition, it defined the State's obligation to support those who, for some reason, could not provide for their families. Therefore, we understand that, even if only preliminarily, such situations happened constantly, so it was necessary to include them in the Federal Constitution.

In 1937, President Getúlio Vargas revoked the previous Constitution, instituting the so-called Estado Novo (New State). In this new version, the Constitution (1937) besides the suppression of political parties and directing all the power to the president, there was the prerogative that the State was authorized to apply policies that regulated public assistance, health houses, clinics, and popular hygiene works. The hygienist ideas took over Brazil in the first decades of the 20th century, which was quite complicated for the black population since the idea of "social cleansing" was connected to the eugenicist ideas of this period (Schwarcz, 1993).

It was only in 1951 that the first law defined racial discrimination as a criminal act, which provided a penalty for those who refused or prevented the movement of black people in commercial establishments, and schools or even denied employment to this population (Federal Law 1.390, July 3, 1951). The law was considered an essential step since it established the association between racism and crime (Gonçalves, 2018).

Finally, after this long path of invalidating the black reality in the country, on January 5, 1989, Law 7,716/1989 was enacted, defining which crimes are considered race or color discrimination and the penalties provided in each case. Even if, for practical purposes, conviction and the payment of fines were not applied, the law is an influential milestone in the struggle for the rights of the black population in the country.

Even when we talk about the difference in treatment of whites and blacks in this period, we know that equal rights do not mean that they are identical among people of different origins and cultures and that such rights should contemplate such differences (Parekh, 1998).

4. Miscegenation and Racial Whitening Ideology

In the late 19th and early 20th century, with the spread of scientific racism theories, many Brazilian scientists and politicians assumed that the racial whitening of the nation would be the most viable social path since white genetics prevailed over black genetics. Because of this racial whitening ideology, the State stimulated the arrival of 2.5 million Europeans who migrated to Brazil between 1890 and 1914. Nine hundred eighty-seven thousand of them had their passage by ship paid by state subsidies, and after World War I, another 847,000 Europeans arrived in the country. However, xenophobia and extreme right-wing movements of that time made the Brazilian eugenics project fail, as such whitening policies began to generate social, political, and economic conflicts (Andrews, 1997).

Many theories related to the formation of society after the proclamation of the Brazilian Republic have emerged since then. Coincidentally, the period of the Abolition of enslaved people in Brazil was the same as the racial theories of evolution and other studies about it. As mentioned early, the scientific and biological argument about races was not sustained, making the authorities come to defend another idea: miscegenation could be the key to saving Brazil. Some intellectuals affirmed:

[...] praised mestizaje as an instrument of racial assimilation of the supposedly inferior groups. Thus, they escaped the determinist trap that condemned Brazil to backwardness and barbarism because it had an immense mass of black and mixed-race people of blacks and mestizos within its borders. (Dantas, 2016, pp. 149-150).

The idea most widespread was that of the intellectual Gilberto Freyre, who proposed in the 1930s that Brazil did not need to become white but to accept that Portuguese colonization was a significant milestone for the nation and that the union of the three races (white, black and indigenous) formed a country in which miscegenation would prevent racism (Freyre, 2003). Freyre's theory was called "racial democracy" and gained several supporters, as miscegenation was considered a legacy of slavery (Andrews, 1997) beneficial to the country. In the book *Casa-Grande & Senzala* (The Masters and the Slaves), he states: "The miscegenation that was widely practiced here corrected the social distance that would otherwise have remained enormous between the master's house [*casa grande*] and the tropical forest; between the master's house and the slave quarters [*senzala*]" (Freyre, 2003, p.33).

The idea of miscegenation as a peaceful solution would have been like an eraser used to rub out the countless crimes committed during the time of slavery, according to Barros (2019). Such biased statements triggered a series of consequences, such as the denial of racism and slavery, relativizing the dehumanization and subjugation of the black population for over 400 years. According to activist Sueli Carneiro, a fact that draws attention in Brazilian society is that the absence of racial identity or racial confusion is assumed as something of our very nature. "It is as if our blurring is in the absence of our being." (Carneiro, 2011, p. 43).

Regarding the deleterious effects of the ideology of racial whitening on the collective identity of black people in Brazil, the anthropologist Kabengele Munanga asked: "How to form an identity around color and blackness not assumed by the majority whose future was projected in the dream of whitening? How to form an identity around a kind of culture somehow expropriated and not always proudly assumed by most blacks and mestizos?" (Munanga, 1999, p.124). According to this author, rethinking the specificities of collective black identity is necessary because this process has often been thought of from the generic Brazilian national identity. Whereas the contributions of the Afro-Brazilian population broadly shaped culture and national identity, these cultural contributions must be re-signified and positively reconstructed.

5. Becoming Black

Officially, the Black Social Movement received this name in the 1920s, but the fight against oppression and for equal rights began in the colonial period. There were records of revolts in the 1840s for the Abolition of enslaved people and pressure from many sides of society to make it happen. Therefore, it is a big mistake to imagine that blacks were passive agents or accepted all violent acts without resistance. On the other hand, there was not, and still is in many cases today, an official diffusion about these movements and importance marks that resulted in Abolition. We can mention the Vaccine Revolt (Rio de Janeiro, 1904), the election of the jurist and black man Manoel Motta Monteiro Lopes for the Parliament (Rio de Janeiro, 1909), and the Chibata Revolt (Rio de Janeiro, 1910) as examples of: "[...] emblematic moments/processes of the politicization of the racial issue and the political presence of the black population in society at that time." (Dantas, 2016, p. 152).

In the 1920s, the Black Social Movement (Movimento Social Negro - MSN) emerged intending to fight for escape strategies and cultural resistance. Its trajectory is long and with powerful moments, historical erasures and reinvigorations, which demarcate spaces for claiming rights (Nascimento, 2017, p. 185).

The emergence and uprising of black movements can be considered a fundamental piece for advancing identity issues and obtaining rights. We left a point where the conflict of races supposedly did not exist for the affirmation and claim of black identity and consciousness with the presentation of new elements, discussions, and issues raised by MSN leaders (Trapp & da Silva, 2011). The history of the MSN can be summarized as having the beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, with a focus on the liberal policy model; between the 1940s and 1950s, on the populist model; and in the 1970s and 1980s, on the disintegration of the technical-military model (Nascimento, 2017).

On July 7, 1978, the Unified Black Movement (*Movimento Negro Unificado* – MNU) was publicly launched, appearing as a pioneering organization in fighting for rights and confronting racism and racial discrimination in Brazil (Miltã, 2010). In this period, the American black movements fought for civil rights in the United States against segregation. The approximation with the Brazilian black movements was beneficial and "an important step towards the conceptual definition of the unifying basis of the struggles against racism in the Western world" (Silva, 2010, p. 13). The American black movements also influenced culture, aesthetics, and music styles such as soul and funk (Trapp, 2011). Even with differences in each social reality, understanding racism as a transnational problem was important to strengthen the Brazilian struggle.

Since the 1970s/1980s, the MNU promoted a positive and anti-racist resignification of the idea of the "black race," which enabled a comprehensive collective identification for Afro-Brazilians. The Movement advocated that both dark-skinned people who declared themselves "*pretos* [black]" and lighter-skinned mixed-race people who declared themselves "*pardos* [brown]" were considered in a single category called "*negros* [black people]". In fact, at that time, several studies showed that both groups shared social and economic disadvantages that cannot only be attributed to differences in class and income but, above all, to the influence of structural racism (Gonzales & Hasenbalg, 2022; Fernandes & Souza, 2016). In this way, national demographic surveys currently use this racial classification in their analyses (IBGE, 2020).

The relationship between identity and subjectivity is strongly connected with self-esteem, which is connected with well-being. When we think about self-esteem, we can think about self-valuation and the knowledge they need. Nevertheless, it is important to consider how is it

possible to know what I need if I do not know who I am (Taylor & Usborne, 2010). In Brazil, the black population could have questions about it because they are not considered citizens of that society, so they did not have the exact needs of the white population. According to Taylor & Usborne (2010), collective groups that do not have a strengthened identity clarity tend to live in a "vacuum identity" caused by many oppressions and disadvantages. This strengthening of collective identity is so vital that it can influence not only a quest for rights. It also influences the ways of living, well-being, psychological health, sense of belonging, and self-esteem. For this reason, the growing presence of the black movement in the country has been relevant to the consolidation of black identity.

In his inauguration speech in 1995, Fernando Henrique Cardoso was the first Brazilian president to declare the existence of the racial problem faced in Brazil. The president's attitude put the racial question on the discussion table, something considered new, because, supposedly, racism has not ever been a problem in the Brazilian problem was social.

This political milestone is one of the most symbolic for the MNU and, according to Sueli Carneiro (2010), one of the main consequences was that, for the first time, the government worked together with the MNU to propose and implement public policies of racial inclusion, denied until then. Another significant milestone was the participation of MNU in the World Conference of Durban (2001), where governments of the whole world, together social movements, discussed racism and anti-racist policies.

Recently, some advances in public policies have begun to be developed in Brazil, for example, the implementation of the law that foresees the mandatory teaching of the "African and Afro-Brazilian History and Culture" themes (Federal Law of Brazil nº 10639, December 20, 2003), the elaboration of the National Policy for Integral Health of the Black Population (Ordinance nº 992, May 13, 2009), in addition to other affirmative action policies in higher education, such as the approval of racial quota for black students (Federal Law of Brazil nº 12.711, August 29, 2012).

In summary, the conditions of possibility for the consolidation of a positive racial identity in Brazil are relatively recent. We can say, with the activist and psychoanalyst Neusa Souza, that it is necessary to "become black":

> The black Brazilian who ascends socially does not deny a presumed black identity. While he does not possess a positive identity, which he can affirm or deny. It is that in Brazil, being born with black skin and or other negroid-type characteristics and sharing the same history of uprooting slavery and racial discrimination does not, in itself, organize a black identity. Thus, being black is not a given condition, a priori. It is a becoming. To be black is to become black (Souza, 2011).

6. Final Considerations

The arduous construction of racial identity in Brazil was not and will not be achieved naturally since the transition from the representation of sub-human attributed to the enslaved black person to a human being (and after a citizen) took place with great difficulty.

It is undeniable the contribution and fundamental role of the entire black movement, since imperial times, for the struggle and social mobilization to result in more significant guarantees for guaranteed rights, considering that "Its role is to legitimize the existence of the black within society, in the face of the legislation." (Gonzalez & Hasenbalg, 2022, p.29). Thus, considering that the reference in the collective identity can be the basis for a positive personal identity, we can understand that by strengthening one type of identity, the other is also strengthened,

generating more self-aware groups and individuals. With the advances presented throughout this work, a fact can be verified.

Throughout Brazilian history, and even today, fundamental rights provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) have been denied to the black community, for example, the right to life, education, and recognition of nationality and religion, among others. The attribution of racial identity to a specific group carries with it a danger, as it can serve various political purposes and be used both in the struggle for rights and to subordinate these groups, point out Pap (2018); this author also warns that the concept of minorities is ambiguous and cannot be the sole criterion for identifying specific groups. Undoubtedly, calling blacks a "minority" in Brazil is contradictory.

Therefore, it is possible to state that racial identity in Brazil is directly related to the guarantee of rights. Barros (2019) argues that political representation only happens under conditions of democratic equality; this equality, even considering small social, economic, and political advances, the black population is far from achieving this. It is important to emphasize that all identities must be integrated into society, with their particularities respected. In our case, it will not be social whitening policies that will achieve a complete black identity and full citizenship of the black community. In this way, the consolidation of black identity is a political response to an excluding system.

In order to promote political mobilization, the black movement has been betting on the solidarity of blacks and mestizos, gathered under the collective identity of "*negros*". The results of this struggle are unpredictable in the long term, but it has given positive signs of being a valid strategy for guaranteeing rights (Munanga, 1996). As Souza (2011) points out, "becoming black" is a political act that directly affects the relationships around us, going from exclusion to inclusion (forced or not) in the political, social, economic, educational, and relational spheres. Only from this resumption of identity the black person can become a subject at all levels.

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