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BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

Race, Racism, and Affirmative Action in Brazil and the United States

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This essay reviews the following works:

Ação afirmativa: Conceito, história e debates. By João Feres Júnior, Luiz Augusto Campos, Verônica Toste Daflon, and Anna Carolina Venturini. Rio de Janeiro: Editora da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 2018. Pp. 190. Open access e-book. ISBN: 9786599036477. https://eduerj.com/?product=acao-afirmativa-conceito-historia-e-debates-ebook.

The Prism of Race: The Politics and Ideology of Affirmative Action in Brazil. By David Lehmann. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018. Pp. xxii + 272. $72.87 hardcover. ISBN: 9780472130849.

Confronting Affirmative Action in Brazil: University Quota Students and the Quest for Racial Justice. By Vânia Penha-Lopes. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017. Pp. xii + 188. $95.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781498537803.

O sistema de cotas para negros da UnB: Um balanço da primeira geração. By Sales Augusto dos Santos. Jundiaí, SP: Paco Editorial, 2015. Pp. 420. R$59,90 paperback. ISBN: 9788546201334.

The Affirmative Action Puzzle: A Living History from Reconstruction to Today. By Melvin I. Urofsky. New York: Pantheon Books, 2020. Pp. xviii + 592. $35.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781101870877.

Antiracist Discourse in Brazil: From Abolition to Affirmative Action. By Teun A. van Dijk. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020. Pp. vii + 256. $103.26 hardcover. ISBN: 9781793615473.

Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents. By Isabel Wilkerson. New York: Random House, 2020. Pp. 496. $32.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780593230251.

Racial and socioeconomic inequality are intertwined in both the United States and Brazil. Yet in the past few decades systemic racism has emerged as a flash point, in part because of the demands of social movements. In the United States the civil rights movement helped ignite governmental action to address the exclusion of African Americans from the "American dream." The movement culminated in the defining legislation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In Brazil, black social movements after the end of military rule (1964–1985) promoted the recognition of racial exclusion as an injustice that required immediate attention.[1]

[1] Some recent essays on related topics are Nancy P. Appelbaum, "Blood, Nation, Science, and Language: Essentializing Race from the Sixteenth Century to the Present," *Latin American Research Review* 55, no. 2 (2020): 352–359, DOI: http://doi.org/10.25222/larr.925; J. M. Rahier, "Multiculturalism, Afro-Descendant Activism, and Ethnoracial Law and Policy in Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 55, no. 3 (2020): 605–612, DOI: http://doi.org/10.25222/larr.1094; Peter Wade, "Racism and Race Mixture in Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 52, no. 3 (2017): 477–485, DOI: http://doi.org/10.25222/larr.124; and Lowell Gudmundson, "Afro-Latin America in Flesh and Blood: Lives from the Battlefield, Cane Field, and Courtroom; Representations from Literature, Politics, and the Genomics Lab," *Latin American Research Review* 52, no. 4 (2017): 689–696, DOI: http://doi.org/10.25222/larr.234.

Fundamental to any comparison of racial inequality in the United States and Brazil is the recognition that the middle and upper classes in Brazil have been and continue to be primarily white, while in the United States a black middle class has emerged largely because of access to historically black colleges and affirmative action, which opened access for African Americans and other people of color to elite, previously almost exclusively white institutions of higher education.[2] In this essay, the term *African American* refers to people descended from those sold into chattel slavery in the British colonies that became the United States. In Brazil, black (*preto*) and brown (*pardo*) people are represented in the 2010 census, as follows: 7.6 percent black and 43.1 percent brown. With the recent shift in racial discourse, references to Brazil's population as over half of African descent are common. For that reason, when this essay refers to black students or black Brazilians, unless otherwise indicated by the context, it includes people in both the black and brown categories.

In Brazil, access to elite, also primarily white higher education has become available to black students because of Brazil's twenty-first-century approach to affirmative action. This distinction is crucial to understanding how each country has approached its legacy of slavery and is the overarching subject of these seven books. The two books about the United States shed light on the systemic basis of everyday racism and the history of race-based affirmative action. The five books about Brazil, each with its own perspective, trace the adoption of racial and socioeconomic quotas. The juxtaposition of Brazil and the United States shines a light on how governmental recognition of group identities allows for measures that work toward more equal societies, both racially and socioeconomically. Although in both countries the method is referred to as "affirmative action," their distinct trajectories allow us to consider the nature of inequality and measures taken to ameliorate it.

Racism and Affirmative Action in the United States

Isabel Wilkerson's *Caste* offers a highly engaging personal narrative by a journalist who seeks to help readers understand the structural and personal dimensions of racism in the United States. By invoking sociological work about segregation in the United States in the last century, she analyzes race and racism through the language of caste, a colonial-era system in India founded on Hindu religious assumptions. Among the variety of subordinate castes, Wilkerson is most interested in Dalits (Scheduled Castes), so named by Ambedkar, a framer of the Indian constitution, who first posited the similarity of subaltern positions held by Dalits and African Americans. By recounting this as a personal journey, Wilkerson draws the reader into her discovery of the Indian caste system during research for her previous book. Through personal interactions with a few upper- and lower-caste Indians, she finds an alternative for explaining racial hierarchy in the United States, where an ideology of equality is belied by reality. She argues that caste is a more enduring concept than race to explain the continuity of racial oppression. Wilkerson guides the reader to her conclusion through her choice of metaphors (diagnosis, house, skeleton, grammar, and template) and by avoiding words one might expect in a book about racism (economic discrimination, distributive justice, capitalism, and reparations). In her scheme, each "caste" (dominant, middle, subordinate) incorporates multiple socioeconomic classes. By including economics within her version of caste, Wilkerson manages to avoid altogether the role of capitalism in promoting and sustaining racist ideology and discriminatory practices.

Through a direct reference to South Africa's "colored" category, Wilkerson uses "middle caste" to denote those who are neither white nor African American (29). However, Wilkerson's book is primarily about the dominant (white) and subordinate (African American) castes. Where nonwhite immigrants, Indigenous peoples, and other people of color fit into the caste system is mentioned in passing, but it is not the subject of her book. Nor is the book about convincing people to change nomenclature; it is hard to imagine people in the United States, no matter their race or color, coming to refer to "casteism" when it is clearly an alternative name for racism and a racialized system of economic and social oppression. Rather, this book is meant to jolt readers, especially white people, into seeing the invisible structure of their own society with fresh eyes. Wilkerson does this by analogizing the familiar to two extreme examples: India's caste system and Nazi Germany. Nazism works for Wilkerson because Jim Crow legislation was used as a prototype for the Nuremburg blood laws (87). After revealing that the one-drop rule was too much even for the Nazis (88), she makes an explicit comparison between European townspeople living near a concentration camp going on with their lives and white mobs in the United States participating in the lynching of African American men.

[2] George Reid Andrews, "Racial Inequality in Brazil and the United States, 1990–2010," *Journal of Social History* 47, no. 4 (2014): 829–854; Theodore Cross and Robert Bruce Slater, "Only the Onset of Affirmative Action Explains the Explosive Growth in Black Enrollments in Higher Education," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 23 (1999): 110–115.

Wilkerson, in her desire to shock, reminds the reader that Nazism lasted for a short period in one century (although anti-Semitism has a long history), while the effect of enslaving Africans has been a way of life for twelve generations.

Wilkerson's consideration of the Indian caste system is neither deep in terms of personal encounters nor deeply researched. What she has done, however, makes for good storytelling in which she asks us to imagine how our system might be equivalent to one distant from our own reality. How does Wilkerson justify the terminological leap from racism to casteism? In her view, racism can no longer be shorthand for systemic, institutional, or structural racial hierarchy, because racism has been "reduced to a feeling, a character flaw, conflated with prejudice, connected to whether one is a good person or not. It has come to mean overt and declared hatred" (68). The focus on the individual, she asserts, keeps the hierarchy intact, so that the "worn grooves of comforting routines and unthinking expectations … look like the natural order of things" (70). Some might call this white implicit bias, while African Americans might consider it proof that they are the "shock absorbers of collective fears" (142). For Wilkerson, "caste" provides a more visible ranking system, because racism has become too easily associated with individual behavior and thus too easily shrugged off. However, it is doubtful that changing the term is a good strategy for changing the system.

As with dystopian novels, in which aspects of ourselves are revealed through tales of horrifying futures, Wilkerson's book draws readers to see our perverse hierarchical social and racial structure through the lens of the inhumanity of distant places and times. Denaturalization of everyday beliefs and behaviors is a hallmark of my own field, cultural anthropology, meaning that we often go elsewhere to learn more about ourselves. Wilkerson has chosen to bring our own system's structural rigidity to light in this fashion. The most engaging aspect of the book, Wilkerson's personal stories, keep the white reader wanting to learn more about how "even" a highly educated, middle-class, and renowned journalist and Pulitzer Prize–winning author is often the subject of mistreatment—the better for liberal white people to identify themselves and invoke her solution of "radical empathy" (386). This is a hopeful gesture, but it is hard to imagine that it could achieve the structural changes we need to live up to the goals of liberal democracy where all are said to be created equal, but are permitted by the state to be unequal. Nonetheless, Wilkerson's book is a successful bestseller precisely because it acknowledges the intransigence of both Nazism and the Indian caste system, while holding out hope that neither is timeless. Nor does structural racism have to be without end if people take Wilkerson's book to heart and pursue what Terri Givens, in her book about structural racism, has called "radical practice," a step well beyond Wilkerson's radical empathy.[3]

Surprisingly, Wilkerson does not discuss affirmative action as a possible remedy for systemic racism (or casteism), even though we know that the numbers of black students admitted to college in the United States increased dramatically with the enforcement of affirmative action. This is shocking when India's quota system for all subordinate castes compels opportunities for a much larger percentage of the population (50 percent) than that of the United States, where African Americans constitute 13 percent of the population. Why would quotas in India be considered an acceptable way of addressing extreme inequality, while in the United States today even suggesting equal opportunity as a goal (the weakest form of affirmative action) is avoided? For this, we turn to historian Melvin Urofsky's *Affirmative Action Puzzle*, an absorbing and deeply researched account of the political and social background of affirmative action in the United States. Urofsky starts by making the important distinction between goal-based, numbers-driven quotas and the opportunity-driven version of affirmative action. The latter is described as "throwing open the gates of opportunity, actively recruiting … and making sure that once hired or admitted to a school, they do not suffer discrimination" (xvii).

Urofsky lays the foundation through the Civil Rights Act of 1866, vetoed by Andrew Johnson and overridden by Congress. Johnson's veto message resonates with arguments that "will be common a century later" (4). The crux of that argument was that the rights of formerly enslaved African Americans would come at the expense of white people's rights—early shadows of "white backlash." Urofsky uses his action-oriented style to keep the reader engaged through a feeling of "then what *really* happened" as we learn how African Americans were disparately treated at each turn in the road. Every time there was a chance that the United States would take inequality seriously, a workaround was found, including the promise of the first *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) Supreme Court decision (known as *Brown I*) that was "eviscerated in *Brown II*" (1955) with its directive that desegregation should proceed "with all deliberate speed" (29). This led to years of foot-dragging and opportunities missed. And then we get to affirmative action.

[3] See Terri Givens, *Radical Empathy: Finding a Path to Bridging Racial Divides* (Bristol, UK: Polity Press, 2021).

Urofsky traces the use of "affirmative action" from its first mention in the 1935 National Labor Relations Act, which did not have an antidiscrimination clause, through FDR's executive order prohibiting discrimination in federal service, to measures drawn immediately after World War II. The 1944 GI Bill granted much of today's middle and upper classes their foothold in an expanding midcentury economy. It was affirmative action for veterans, providing "outright employment preferences," bonus points, and a college education. However, the GI Bill also accommodated Jim Crow in the South and housing discrimination in the North. For example, while "20,000 black veterans attended college by 1947" (25), albeit in predominantly underfunded black colleges, only a tiny percentage of insured mortgages were given to nonwhite veterans (24), the legacy of which has kept black family wealth substantially lower than that of whites. Nonetheless, as has become clear in Brazil half a century later, education is what provides the opportunity for a middle-class life and is still the key to moving into more powerful levels of corporate and national leadership. Ironically, or perhaps predictably, the educational preferences created by the original GI Bill would, thirty years later in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), be declared unconstitutional "quotas" for the grandchildren of those post–World War II African American veterans.

In the initial fifteen years of affirmative action, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) emerged as a powerful institution dedicated to making progress in both the private and public sectors. Private businesses were some of the most receptive to workforce diversity, including at top levels. Although this was initially related to government contracts that required goals be met, diversity has become good business. Urofsky expands on these interlocking phenomena, showing that a policy of "outright preference" under Nixon led companies to develop "goals and timetables." With a firm number-guided policy, "affirmative action had become a way of life for many large corporations" (111).[4] However, consent decrees between the EEOC and companies often failed to take into consideration labor contracts, allowing companies to disregard negotiated seniority rights. In the public sphere, this included police and fire departments and their unions (268). One might conjecture that such enforcement pitted white against nonwhite workers, a glimpse of the "zero-sum" mentality (147, 191) that remains a cornerstone of both anti–affirmative action measures and the deadly forces of racism. Economic studies concluded that quota-based affirmative action worked from a financial perspective: "the benefits of the policy … far outweighed the costs" (128). But, as Urofsky observes, the backlash against affirmative action is not about success per se, but rather "about how we view what equality in America means" (129). Most important is the fundamental place that individualism and the myth of meritocracy holds in the particular version of liberal ideology of the United States (185). This stands in contrast to liberal democracies elsewhere that accept group rights as a necessary component of equality.

Urofsky also traces the move away from a group-rights approach since the 1978 *Bakke* decision. Laws to address discrimination, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Civil Rights Act of 1991, do not address affirmative action. Since the *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger* decisions in 2003, affirmative action in higher education remains an opportunity-based policy focusing on diversity in which race might be one of many factors, while state ballot initiatives have either abolished or tightened the use of any form of affirmative action. For example, in 2006 the Michigan electorate passed a constitutional amendment prohibiting preferential treatment in higher education (371), upheld by the Supreme Court in 2014. Even so, universities continue to seek diversity, leading Urofsky to conclude that affirmative action in the United States is not yet dead. Citing polls from 2009 and 2012, Urofsky explains that Obama's election did not "mark the end of overt racism" (423). Some analysts considered white attitudes as more a matter of "resentment" than racism, as "the animosity of the aggrieved," believing without evidence that whites had been deprived by the entrance of nonwhites into the workplace and higher education (424). In fact, "one in ten white men reported they had lost a job opportunity or a promotion to a woman or minority." But if 10 percent had lost out, there should be at least four times the number of women and minorities in management positions, which there are not (459). As Urofsky points out, this is not about facts but about feelings and, together with media representations, has contributed to a white identity that more than a few feel needs to be protected against the demographic shift underway.

While Urofsky uses the term "puzzle" to refer to US affirmative action, when we juxtapose the US and Brazilian approaches to affirmative action we may find that the case of Brazil is also puzzling. This is where

[4] On March 31, 2021, "seventy-two Black executives" issued a letter urging companies to fight voter suppression measures under consideration in forty-three states, "call[ing] on all of corporate America to publicly oppose new laws that would restrict the rights of Black voters" (Andrew Ross Sorkin and David Gelles, "Black Executives Call on Corporations to Fight Restrictive Voting Laws, *New York Times*, March 31, 2021).

the class and ethnoracial history of Brazil provides a counterpoint to the United States, where, as noted above, being white is the first identity. In Brazil, members of the poor and working classes perceive a close alignment of class and race.[5] This, together with a century of encouraging intermarriage to "lighten" the poor of all colors (rural and urban), including former slaves (with the goal of "improving" the Brazilian nation), may provide one piece of the puzzle. However, it is not dispositive by any means. A further comparison of the United States and Brazil allows us to consider an even more fundamental difference: how each country approaches the political quality of rights. Urofsky personally affirms his belief, deep-seated in the United States, that rights belong to individuals, not groups. Thus Urofsky objects to hard affirmative action (quotas), preferring the soft version (outreach and opportunity). For him, the former violates equal protection: "By treating people as part of a group—African American, Hispanic, disabled, female—we have gone against one of the basic tenets of American democracy and the constitutional order, namely, that rights are individual" (467). Yet he recognizes that individuals still face discrimination on a group basis, so he stands with decisions "from the Supreme Court on down" (468) that affirmative action of any sort, although necessary, can only be a temporary measure. In this regard, Urofsky is not unhappy that there was a brief attempt to consider group rights, as was done between the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and *Bakke* in 1978. In fact, *Bakke* was the turning point that marked the forbidden line that must not be crossed in the United States—the line that turns opportunities into quotas.

Affirmative Action and Quotas in Brazil

An older laissez faire liberal perspective that sees rights as belonging solely to individuals and not to groups can be a serious impediment to securing structural solutions capable of addressing socioeconomic and racial/ethnic inequality. Unlike the United States, however, Brazil's 1988 constitution included group rights, and both the Brazilian Supreme Court (Supremo Tribunal Federal, or STF) and the majority of Brazilians polled see inequality as a structural problem, best addressed through a "hard" version of affirmative action. Studies show that Brazilians understand they live in a country where the distribution of wealth is radically unequal and decisively shaped by race and color. Brazil has not invested in a dream in which anyone can achieve wealth and influence, but rather one in which the whitening principle—an almost mirror image of the United States—would permit advancement. With the recent shift from this myth of racial democracy to a "new awareness of embedded racial disadvantage," twenty-first-century Brazilians "recognize [the existence of] structural racism and about half of them supported a race-targeted approach to ameliorate racial inequality," in other words, quotas.[6] By 2003, public universities were initiating racial quotas, and by 2012, seventy-three out of ninety-five had implemented such policies.[7] By way of explanation, Brazilians without access to resources attend poorly funded public elementary and high schools, while the wealthy send their children to private schools. In higher education, the reverse is true. Well-prepared students are able to attend tuition-free public universities, which means that, given the unequal social structure, public universities are largely white. At the same time, the salience of class, also as a structural matter, is quite high in Brazil at all levels of society, to such an extent that the Law of Quotas, which followed on the heels of the 2012 STF decision upholding racial quotas at the University of Brasília (UnB), requires that 50 percent of federal public higher education slots be reserved for public school students and, within that, slots are reserved for Afro-descendants and people of Indigenous ancestry in numbers proportionate to the population of the state where the university is located, with 25 percent reserved for families with very low income.

Each book discussed below begins with a brief sketch of the origin of affirmative action in Brazil. While emphases differ depending on the author's ideological perspective, there is a more or less well-established narrative. With the end of the military regime in 1985, people began to mobilize against racism in Brazilian society, a concern that had been repressed by the military government, which sought to sustain the now debunked myth of racial democracy (Brazil as a racial paradise). The 1988 constitution, by contrast, outlawed racism and offered some recognition of the rights of Afro-descendants while opening the door to demands for racial equality and against all forms of discrimination. In 1995, as the result of a demonstration in Brasília to commemorate the death of Zumbi of Palmares (the seventeenth-century leader of the largest fugitive slave community in Brazilian history), then president Fernando Henrique Cardoso met with black

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[5] See Edward E. Telles, *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[6] Stanley Bailey, Fabrício Fialho, and Michelle Peria, "Support for Race-Targeted Affirmative Action in Brazil," *Ethnicities* 18, no. 6 (2018): 767, 780.

[7] Michelle Peria and Stanley Bailey, "Remaking Racial Inclusion: Combining Race and Class in Brazil's New Affirmative Action," *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 9, no. 2 (2014): 156–176.

movement leaders who demanded affirmative action. This moment is often cited as the first clear sign of the shift in official discourse about race, although little came to fruition. Interest in affirmative action also emerged as a topic of national conversation during the two years of local preparatory activities leading up to the 2001 United Nation's World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa. Once Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva became president, a special secretariat (SEPPIR) with the status of a ministry was established, accompanied by a law requiring the teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture. This was followed, in 2010, by congressional passage of the Racial Equality Statute, which further cemented a twenty-first-century emphasis on race and color as topics for public debate by social movements, the government, politicians, and the media.

In *The Prism of Race*, the British sociologist David Lehmann frames the "politics and ideology of affirmative action in Brazil" around three questions: why public higher education emerged as the site of contention; how to reconcile color assignment and racial identity; and whether black supporters of racial quotas constituted a "true" social movement given their ties to the Brazilian state. The book also offers enlightening descriptions of how the expansion of government funding for both public and private, for-profit universities expanded opportunities for black students, and how the creative use of political theory can help us to better understand anti-quota activists. As Lehmann points out, mandating quotas can even be viewed as an inexpensive way to both create a more equitable educational system and assuage disgruntlement that might lead to societal disruption (8, 153). Yet undergirding the book is Lehmann's worry about the independence and authenticity of movements and individuals.

The driving force behind the quotas campaign, Lehmann argues, was to gain access to elite institutions of higher education rather than to reduce social inequality (71). He explains this either/or proposition through the lens of state corporatism—the interpenetration of the state with identity politics and consciousness raising—because in his view black social movements had been co-opted by the state (171).[8] In his account, grassroots organizing in Brazil as a whole was impeded by Lula's left-leaning government because it produced a civil society less independent of the government than elsewhere (166). Social movements came to have excessive faith in state policy as the driver for social equality (72), presumably based on cash-transfer programs that lifted many out of extreme poverty and promoted others to a lower middle-class status. Thus, the promise of equality for nonwhite Brazilians was left to proponents of racial quotas who were, Lehmann suggests, primarily white professors and the middle-class black activists who led black social movements. In the course of his discussion of such movements, Lehmann provides an enlightening history of their relationship with the Ford Foundation (160–166), their primary international funding source.

Lehmann, however, also examines "self-help" organizations "in the field of black advancement" (173) that prepare poor black students for college entrance exams. He considers these organizations more independent than other black social movements and places them on a spectrum running from those most dedicated to consciousness-raising (EDUCAFRO) to those most interested in building a black middle class (Steve Biko Institute). This is combined with theoretical deliberations to determine which black social movements qualify as "true" social movements, those able to inspire a mass following and achieve results with sufficient independence from the state. While remaining equivocal, he concludes that "if by effective is meant that [the black movement] can claim substantial achievements, then it has been effective especially in the quota campaigns, and it does deserve the name [of social movement]" (211).

Concerned about the intersection between color/phenotype self-identification and racial classification, Lehmann frames the pros and cons of using quota availability as a form of consciousness-raising with examples from early racial quota adopters, such as UnB and the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). For example, the 2003 UnB racial quota system used a system of photographs evaluated by a committee, which was replaced by an interview system in 2007. Both proponents and opponents of quotas, he suggests, viewed this in terms of the raising of racial consciousness of those who might otherwise be reluctant to self-identify as black. Critics were concerned that this could transform the relaxed Brazilian attitude toward color self-designation, in which a person might identify as *moreno* (an informal color category that can range from brunette to dark brown depending on the context), into an ancestry-based binary racial system like that of the United States. Given the increased attention devoted to racial discrimination, especially police

[8] Others assert that institutionalization of black social movements was evidence of strengthened collective mobilization and guaranteed visibility in civil society, creating spaces of mediation and control within the state. See Flavia Rios, "Antirracismo, movimentos sociais e estado (1985–2016)," in *Movimentos sociais e institucionalização: Políticas sociais, raça e gênero no Brasil pós-transição*, ed. Adrian Gurza Lavalle, Euzeneia Carlos, Monika Dowbor, and José Szwako (Rio de Janeiro: EdUERJ, 2019), 255–283.

violence against dark-skinned people, quota supporters saw this as a positive step that allowed applicants to assume the blackness already imposed on them by the wider society, whether by employers, the police, banks, restaurant staff, or high-income white Brazilians living in walled communities.

As public universities began to recognize the improbable whiteness of their institutions in a country that is over half African-descended, university governance councils in the early 2000s began reserving places for black (*preto*) and brown (*pardo*) students, thus bringing their institutions more in line with the overall population. The debate, as revealed in Lehmann's narrative, is between those who prefer a more liberal, clientelist model (96) and those who prefer a more systemic solution (103) that requires students to declare themselves black as a vehicle to institutional equity. Lehmann explains the position of academic opponents of quotas as flowing from Brazilian modernism, which did not equate itself with unified global modernity, rather than flowing from covert racism. For opponents, Brazil's distinctiveness was based on a theory of "multiple modernities," which led them to see the institutionalization of a binary racial classification through quotas as an illiberal importation of a US model (115). For this reason, they consistently argued for affirmative action in the "strict liberal sense" (122), based on outreach rather than outcome. In fact, Lehmann himself is troubled by what he terms the "paradox of self-assignment" in a society where racial classification is being forced on a society pervaded by race mixture. As such, "self-assignment in deciding eligibility for valued resources is not compatible with a liberal concept of equality before the law" (125). Like Urofsky, Lehmann recognizes the "racial dimension of social exclusion" (112) and seems more sympathetic to a (procedural) approach using opportunity affirmative action rather than a (substantive) systemic quota approach (117).

A distinctive analytic is brought to bear by the critical discourse studies scholar Teun van Dijk in *Antiracist Discourse in Brazil*. Adopting a multidisciplinary and global approach, the book focuses on the Brazilian version of antiracist discourse, which is defined as "a major form of antiracist resistance" that stands at the "interface between antiracist sociopolitical practice and antiracist attitudes and ideologies" (3). Above all, it seeks to identify the social and political discursive genres that characterize the "historically changing social, political and communicative structures of Brazilian society" (7). In the Brazilian context, van Dijk addresses black history, antiracist legislation, and twenty-first-century affirmative action debates using diverse methodologies: cognitive models (knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, and mental and context models); actors, action, and interaction theories; and approaches to elite versus popular discourse. Unlike the other texts reviewed, van Dijk pays special attention to the shape of the historical discourses of Brazilian abolitionists, which demonstrate continuities with modern antiracism discourse.

Antiracist Discourse in Brazil begins with a fascinating treatment of antislavery and abolitionist discourse from the sixteenth to the end of the nineteenth centuries. Although this is a long period to cover, van Dijk does a splendid job of choosing sources and stays true to his promise of analyzing the texts using his theoretical tools. The discursive examples from the most famous antislavery (Jesuit) and abolitionist leaders are enlightening even to those familiar with them. He is also not afraid to make connections to religious and humanitarian discourse, such as that of the Quakers, and he makes informed assumptions about what Brazilian elites knew about other slaveholding nations. In abolitionist discourse, we can see references to the "black race" and criticisms of the myth about the easier life of slaves in Brazil (61), foreshadowing later debates, as well as descriptions of the brutality of slavery and hypocrisy of slave owners (73). Van Dijk follows the trajectory of antiracist discourse to the modern Brazilian "strategy of racism denial" (121). His sui generis analysis of the writings of prominent leaders, black and white (including women), is a wonderful companion to other more pro forma accounts of that history.

The highlight of *Antiracist Discourse in Brazil* is the final chapter, which offers a detailed analysis of "parliamentary debates about university quotas for black students" between 2000 and the Law of Quotas in 2012 (27). In focusing on the discursive strategies of the congressional supporters of affirmative action, the chapter serves as a corrective to the excessive attention given to the conservative media's opposition to quotas (124). The chapter also addresses the debates in the Chamber of Deputies about the Racial Equality Statute passed in 2010. It is important to note that the conservative senator Demóstenes Torres removed explicit quota provisions from the Racial Equality Statute before it was signed into law, but importantly the statute did not ban quotas. Most of the speakers begin with their self-declared racial identity, almost all of them black. The fascinating qualitative analysis includes close examination of main topics (semantic macrostructures, such as history and experiences of racism), semantic structures (argumentation), representations of the "black in-group" and its opponents, and semantic analysis (implications, presuppositions, and metaphors). The chapter is rich in detail and deals with black parliamentarians' responses to many of the arguments against racial quotas. Van Dijk's goal of taking antiracist discourse seriously is clearly met. If there is a disappointing

aspect of this book, it would be the absence of full citations to the analyzed discourse, and the inclusion of the original Portuguese would have been helpful.[9]

In *O sistema de cotas para negros da UnB*, the sociologist Sales Augusto dos Santos provides an alternative to Lehmann's reading of the racial quota struggle and the 2012 Law of Quotas. For Santos, a working-class Afro-Brazilian who has both UnB undergraduate and PhD degrees (pre-quotas) and was active in the struggle for quotas there (298), black movements were primarily responsible for placing affirmative action on the public agenda in a bottom-up initiative that did not originate with or owe much to either the Cardoso or Lula government. For Santos, who is writing from the perspective of the autonomous black movement, the Zumbi March in 1995 was the "parting of the waters in the fight against racism" (32), and he emphasizes (as with the general narrative detailed earlier) that while black movement activity was decisive in preparatory events leading up to the 2001 Durban conference, effective advocacy for affirmative action after 2000 was led by black lawmakers, such as those discussed by van Dijk, working in parallel with black social movements. If small inroads had been made at the federal level under Cardoso, affirmative action languished, in his view, because the government lacked true commitment. Even after public universities enacted racial quota policies in the early 2000s, the government failed to provide financial support to facilitate retention of black students.

An important difference between Lehmann and Santos is that Lehmann sees elite access and racial equality as an either/or proposition, while Santos sees racial quotas as a "passport that allows entry to the world of the middle class and elite leaders" (165). Lehmann concedes that racial disadvantage is most pronounced in the "upper half of the income distribution and becomes acute at the top decile" (106), but does not see this effect as crucial to equality. In contrast, Santos is emphatic in his view that quotas should be only for those who suffer discrimination and not as a means to fight class disadvantage or the effects of poverty (80). To increase social mobility of black students at UnB, the policy required that quotas be set in each academic department, including the more prestigious ones, as it is in the Law of Quotas. The STF confirmed the constitutionality of the UnB policy in April 2012, and a few months later Congress passed the Law of Quotas (with only one negative vote), including socioeconomic quotas, and it was immediately implemented in all federal public universities. Santos argues that the STF decision was sufficient in its upholding of racial quotas and criticizes the subsequent inclusion in the Law of Quotas of social as well as racial quotas, which he claims were enacted to "place a brake on the rising tide" of race-only quotas (82). For Santos, the political issue is that race should never be subsumed by class. His criticism of the Law of Quotas is that middle-class black applicants are not able to utilize the new system if they go to private schools before applying to university (259). His argument is clearly in line with Wilkerson's perspective that racial discrimination happens at all levels of society and that special consideration should therefore be accorded to black people of all classes.

In *Confronting Affirmative Action in Brazil*, sociologist Vânia Penha-Lopes, an Afro-Brazilian woman who earned her degrees and has an academic career in the United States, allows us to "hear the voices" of quota students admitted at UERJ after the Rio de Janeiro Legislative Assembly created the country's first public university admissions quota law in 2001. Penha-Lopes conducted her interviews in 2006–2007 with some of the first racial quota students to graduate in Brazil, most of whom came from low-income families, and many of whom had attended free preparatory courses with organizations discussed by Lehmann. Unlike Santos, she writes that "it is impossible to separate completely racial from social inequality, as both variables are intimately correlated in Brazilian social reality." Many students at this tuition-free public state university reported that transportation costs, time constraints because of having to work, and the cost of materials restricted their participation. Some of her interviewees spoke of negative attitudes of professors toward quota students, while others commented on the spaces of sociability created among all students. Yet many still recounted stories about discrimination based on their darker skin color. "The stigma of slavery continues to affect the quality of life of darker-skinned Brazilians," Penha-Lopes writes (29), and she too worries, like Santos, that some still "interpret racial inequality as being subordinate to social inequality instead of an autonomous phenomenon, which strengthens the old view that racism is not as serious a problem in Brazil" (143).

Penha-Lopes also directly addresses how the racial quota system can reinforce or mold racial identity (73), expressed in more subtle ways than simply as "consciousness-raising." Because most of the students saw brown and black as different, she saw the fluidity in their identities, even as they took advantage of the new policies. For this reason, Penha-Lopes hopes that the students will see an "advantage in affirming the Afro-descendant part of our celebrated racial mixture." Perhaps differently than Santos, she sees the challenge

[9] For how to access the original speeches, see Bryan Pitts, Yahn Wagner Pinto, and Madeleine Roberts, "Sound and Politics: The Audio Archive of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies," *Latin American Research Review* 55, no. 1 (2020): 135–147.

as lying in the "need to recognize the socioeconomic oppression of non-whites … without trying to force them into a system with which they may not identify" (80). It is impossible to recount here the diversity of the interviewees' perspectives, but reading their words is a breath of fresh air after engaging mainly with statistics and ideological position taking. For this reason alone, the book is worth exploring.[10]

Ação afirmativa: Conceito, história e debates, by the political scientists João Feres Júnior and Anna Carolina Venturini and the sociologists Luiz Augusto Campos and Verônica Toste Daflon, brings us closer to the present through a well-written and carefully researched book with a panoramic view of affirmative action in Brazil, including a sustained comparison with India, the United States, and South Africa. A distinctive aspect of this book is its careful treatment of how quotas took hold at the local level and then bubbled up. The authors give credit to black social movements, as does Santos, but they take a more nuanced approach, showing that what is often referred to as "the black movement" was actually a number of different movements and organizations. Those organizations were characterized at times by clashing perspectives, but they came to converge in support of racial quotas as they lobbied university administrators, state and federal legislatures, and the national government to adopt measures to combat racial inequality (95).

Feres and his coauthors add components that are not addressed in the other books. For example, they provide a quantitative analysis of the mainstream media, whose coverage of the affirmative action controversy before 2012 gave opponents many more opportunities to express their views than they gave proponents (128). Unlike any of the other books, theirs has a full chapter on graduate education, which is not subject to the quota system approved by the STF or required by the 2012 Law of Quotas. As of January 2018, 610 graduate programs had instituted affirmative action of various modalities (147), the majority in the human and social sciences. In response to the debate about inclusion versus meritocracy, the book shows through external rankings of graduate programs that inclusivity does not hinder "academic excellence" (156). Because the professoriate in Brazil is overwhelmingly white, the importance of graduate-level affirmative action cannot be overstated. The conclusion of *Ação afirmativa* reflects on the fifteen years since the advent of quota systems in Brazil, noting that none of the fears expressed (racialization of Brazilian society, instilling racial conflict, stigmatizing black people, and destroying national identity) have come to pass (165).

Conclusion

As Feres and coauthors point out, quota policies are of "major social and political significance" and have "revolutioniz[ed] the way administrators, academics, and the population in general understand the racial question, injustices and solutions to combat them" (170). In fact, as of 2018, 51 percent of federal public university graduates were Afro-descendants, up from 34 percent in 2003.[11] This begs the question why affirmative action has not taken the form of quotas in the United States, while in Brazil quotas have taken hold and are expanding without sustained controversy. Wilkerson, for example, does not discuss affirmative action at all, let alone quotas, even though her main comparison is India, where quotas are set in many spheres for 50 percent of the population at the bottom of society. Because the solution in India is affirmative action, it is curious that she does not even address it. Though Wilkerson doesn't tell us why, Urofsky fills in the blanks. After fifteen years of racial quotas in higher education, the Supreme Court in *Bakke* began making it more difficult to use affirmative action for nonwhite applicants to universities. This moment of recognizing group rights was stymied by the US fixation on an individualistic interpretation of equality. Fashioned as a zero-sum game, this sleight of hand obscures the structural advantages for certain groups in gaining access to the most prestigious universities. However, as Urofsky points out, affirmative action continues in the move by universities toward a holistic approach to admissions with race as one of many factors.

Affirmative action is unpopular in the United States precisely because whiteness has become a powerful group identity, in which each white individual can be displaced by someone of color. In Brazil, on the other hand, where group rights are enshrined in the constitution and Brazilians as a whole see inequality as a structural problem, socioeconomic and racial quotas have changed the face of higher education. Of course, Brazil with its radical socioeconomic and racial inequalities has a long way to go to achieve its dream of equality. As Urofsky explains, the key is to understand how the realities of inequality intersect with what equality means in each society.

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[10] Another ethnographic book about UERJ quota students by a non-Brazilian white man would be an excellent pairing for teaching: André Cicalo, *Urban Encounters: Affirmative Action and Black Identities in Brazil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[11] Forum Nacional de Pro-Reitores de Assuntos Comunitários e Estudantis, *V Pesquisa Nacional de Perfil Socioeconômico e Cultural dos(as) Graduandos(as) das IFES—2018* (Brasília: FONAPRASE, 2019), 21.

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