BECOMING BLACK POLITICAL SUBJECTS

Movements and Ethno-Racial Rights in Colombia and Brazil

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

POLITICAL FIELD ALIGNMENTS

In 1991, black farmers and miners left the rural areas of Colombia's Pacific Coast, making their way to the capital city of Bogotá. They took with them marimbas, drums, and songs about rural life and culture with the intention of serenading the delegates to the National Constituent Assembly. Their *serenatas* served one purpose: to convince those elected to draft Colombia's new constitution that the state should grant black communities specific rights. Ultimately, they succeeded, and the country's 1991 constitution recognized that black people, like indigenous peoples, were a distinct "ethnic group" whose right to collective territory was to be legally protected. The constitution also mandated the adoption of the Law of Black Communities (1993), which recognized the rights of rural black communities to ethnic education, alternative development, natural resources, political participation, and local autonomy. This legislation profoundly disrupted the way that the Colombian state had imagined the nation for nearly a century, as racially mixed and culturally homogeneous.

Colombia's neighbor, Brazil, had reformed its constitution along similar lines just three years before when it recognized the land rights of indigenous peoples and descendants of runaway slaves. However, Brazil's more transformative ethno-racial reforms came about a decade later with a wave of policies designed to "promote racial equality." This happened in August 2001, when black Brazilian activists flew to Durban, South Africa, as part of one of the largest delegations to the United Nation's Third World Conference against Racism.[1] In contrast to Afro-Colombians who carried with them symbols of cultural difference, Brazil's black activists traveled equipped with official statistics on racial inequality and discrimination in their country. They had one main objective: to pressure the Brazilian state to grant the country's black population reparations in the form of affirmative action policies.[2] The strategy worked. In December 2001, then-president Fernando Henrique Cardoso gave an historic speech in which he stated, "The Brazilian state recognizes the painful consequences that slavery has caused in Brazil and it will continue with the task of repairing such

damage through policies that promote equal opportunity."[3] He added that the best way to address this issue was through both "universal and affirmative action policies for Afro-descendants." Subsequently, government agencies and nearly a hundred of Brazil's most prestigious universities implemented unparalleled race-based affirmative action policies with the goal of proactively addressing racial inequality and discrimination.

These political changes in Colombia and Brazil disrupted prevalent state discourses, which had denied the existence of racism and downplayed these countries' cultural heterogeneity for decades. Nationalist narratives in these cases had been based on the notion of *mestizaje*—the idea that biological mixture and cultural hybridity between European, indigenous, and African peoples—had given way to a racially egalitarian and homogeneous society. The official state discourse was that these countries had overcome their sordid histories of slavery and colonization to create racial paradises of sorts. As such, the state, and society more generally, often dismissed those who thought otherwise. Black activists were often accused of importing racism from elsewhere, and in rare cases, the state repressed such ideas outright.[4] However, this began to change radically in the late 1980s, as states throughout Latin America recognized black and indigenous rights as well as adopted policies aimed at bringing about ethno-racial equality. These reforms shook the very foundation upon which nationalism was built in these countries.

In this book, I examine these political transformations in Colombia and Brazil. More specifically, I analyze the process through which blackness became legitimated as a category of political contestation in the eyes of the state and other powerful political actors. In order to do so, I examined archives and conducted ethnographic fieldwork over nearly eight years in the style of what scholars across disciplines have called "political ethnography" (Auyero 2006; Baiocchi and Connor 2008; Schatz 2013). While this approach to ethnography relies on participant observation, it is more fundamentally about being immersed in political communities in ways that lead to a more textured analysis of political processes.[5] Embedding myself in the very political processes I was studying helped to generate a productive analysis that moved beyond simple "categories of state, civil society, and social movements," as Baiocchi and Conner (2008, 139) have noted. In the methodological appendix, I explain my methods in greater detail and also explore how being an African American woman affiliated with elite U.S. universities shaped my experience in the field.

I first ask: Why did the Colombian and Brazilian states go from citizenship regimes based in ideas of the universal and formally unmarked citizen to the recognition of black rights? I argue that in both cases they did so in the face of pressure from black social movement organizations. However, while these movements were essential to the making of black political

subjects, they were small and under-resourced networks of activists. They also had very few political allies and were unpopular with, and largely unknown to, the masses. In fact, social movement scholars might debate the extent to which they were movements at all. Even if we assume they were in fact movements, we are still left with many questions about why activists were able to reshape state policy and discourse in such drastic ways. Their success runs counter to the ideas that have been cultivated for decades that massive, disruptive movements as well as those with strong political allies and favorable public opinion are more likely to bring about the changes they desire.[6]

Yet the story I weave together here is still fundamentally about how black social movements in Colombia and Brazil did succeed—against all odds—in bringing about specific legislation for black populations as well as substantive changes in popular discourse. In addition to analyzing the strategies they used to do so, I also examine how their embeddedness in a complex field of local and global politics often blurred the very definition of what a social movements is. In this vein, I argue that the only way to understand the making of black political subjects in Colombia and Brazil is to take as a point of departure the idea that these movements, like many movements around the world, operate within the material and discursive boundaries of multiple fields of contestation.

The two fields in which black movements were embedded in these cases were the field of domestic politics, and something I call the global ethno-racial field. These fields (a term I borrow from Bourdieu) were composed of local and global discourses of race, nation, and rights as well as a plethora of political actors, including state officials, academic "experts," environmentalists, international human rights advocates, development workers, capitalists, and other social movement actors. I show how black movements in Colombia and Brazil successfully pressured their respective states to adopt ethno-racial reforms because they acted strategically in the context of this consolidated global ethno-racial field oriented around multiculturalism, indigenous rights, and anti-racism, which converged with profound changes in the domestic political fields of these countries. I contend that by mobilizing around these political field alignments, black movements in Colombia and Brazil overcame significant ideological and material odds to ultimately transform citizenship regimes previously based on homogeneity and formal colorblindness.

The second question I seek to answer is: Why have black rights taken such distinct forms in different countries in Latin America? Nearly every country in the region has adopted some type of ethno-racial policies over the last three decades. However, unlike previous scholarship I do not see these reforms all as making up a singular "multicultural turn."[7] Instead, I argue that it is more useful to view these changes as constituting two

distinct moments of interplay between domestic and global politics. The first of these, I suggest, began to unfold in the late 1980s with the shift to what Van Cott (2000) called "multicultural constitutionalism." In this period, Latin American states reformed their constitutions in ways that recognized the "pluri-ethnic" and "multicultural" character of the political community while at the same time they extended specific rights to indigenous peoples and in some cases to black populations. In countries that did include blacks in this multicultural alignment, the black political subject that emerged was defined by a discourse of cultural difference and autonomy that was very much entangled with concerns about the struggle and well-being of indigenous peoples.

About a decade later, Latin American states initiated a new wave of ethno-racial reforms aimed at combating racial discrimination and bringing about racial equality. This included establishing national holidays celebrating black history and culture, creating state institutions aimed at combating racial discrimination, including new kinds of ethno-racial questions on national censuses, and the passing of anti-discrimination legislation. Unlike the multicultural policies of the 1980s–1990s, blacks—rather than indigenous peoples—were the presumed subjects of these new reforms. I examine how both of these rounds of reforms played out in two of the most important cases in the region, Colombia and Brazil.

Last, I explore the broader social and political consequences of these shifts. By the time I embarked upon fieldwork in 2006, I did not find the kind of silencing of racial critique that previous scholars found to be so prevalent in this region. Instead, both the Colombian and Brazilian states talked openly about racism and ethno-racial policies.[8] Moreover, rather than be seen as divisive, black identity was considered a legitimate political category. Yet while these governments had dramatically shifted their discourse around ethno-racial issues, many questions remained unresolved. Who would be the beneficiaries of these policies? How would blackness be defined in these contexts where ethno-racial categories were notoriously so blurry? Did people have to be rural and culturally distinct, reside in "black regions," or trace their ancestry back to runaway slaves to qualify for multicultural rights? Would having a black ancestor be enough to qualify one for affirmative action at a university?

Further, given that both Colombia and Brazil are notorious for their gaps between laws on the books and actual state practices, did these reforms actually matter on the ground? I show how the institutionalization of ethno-racial rights and policies not only reconfigured the state, it also reshaped the terms—both the conditions and language—of the black movement itself. In the wake of what were inevitably partial victories, what developed were entangled relationships between black movement actors and the state, as well as contentious debates within these movements over questions of

authenticity, representation, and political autonomy. All of these political dynamics shaped how deep these reforms actually went.

FROM RACE MIXTURE TO BLACK RIGHTS

Throughout most of the twentieth century, elites, ordinary citizens, and visitors shared a view of Latin America as a region of racial harmony. Such an idea made some sense when you situated these cases in a global context. In a world of Jim Crow, apartheid, and ethnic cleansing, Latin America—with its high levels of mixing, its lack of racially exclusionary laws, and its low levels of ethno-racial conflict—seemed exceptional. These characteristics were especially pronounced when contrasted with the racist regimes of the United States up until the 1960s or South Africa until the 1990s (Freyre 1933; Pierson 1942; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1999; Fry and Maggie 2004; Magnoli 2009).[9] To some observers, even slavery took a more benevolent form in places like Brazil than it did in the United States (Tannenbaum 1947; Harris 1956; Hoetink 1967).

Latin American state officials echoed this sentiment, often presenting their countries on the world stage as models of racial egalitarianism. As one Brazilian diplomat suggested before the United Nations in 1978, "even though there is a multiplicity of races that live within our borders, racial problems simply do not exist in Brazil."[10] State officials in both countries argued that the prevalence of race mixture, and a tradition of colorblind legalism, and universal citizenship had made racial conflict disappear. A Colombian diplomat captured this idea well in a 1984 report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD): "The legal and social organization of Colombia has always guaranteed racial equality and the absence of discrimination [against] any element of the population."[11] This statement channeled a deeply entrenched nationalism based on *mestizaje*. Also implied in these narratives was that countries like Colombia and Brazil had overcome the stain of slavery and colonization, something their neighbors to the north had not.

During the colonial period, European colonists, enslaved Africans, and indigenous peoples did, in fact, intermix more in Latin America than they did in English colonies. While this might suggest that these differences were cultural in nature, scholars have argued that they were more likely the result of vastly different demographic and political dynamics in these different regions (Degler 1971; Telles 2004). Whereas English settlers came to the United States fleeing religious persecution with their families in tow, Portuguese and Spanish colonists were men largely migrating alone and often with the idea that they would make a fortune in the New World and return home. There is no doubt that, in some cases, African and indigenous women entered

into some consensual concubine relationships with European men in colonial Latin America (Stolcke 1989). However, many of the encounters that produced these mixed-race nations also entailed violence and coercion, something that narratives of *mestizaje* often obscure (Stolcke 1989; Caldwell 2007).

Nevertheless, the most significant distinction between Latin America and the United States was not the amount of race mixture per se, but where this mixture figured into the law and into the nationalist project. The United States increasingly outlawed miscegenation over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while Latin American countries not only allowed mixture, they often celebrated it. Under *mestizaje* nationalism, the *mestizo* ("mixed person") became the quintessential national subject, and indigenous and black populations often stood at the center of the symbolic nation. Moreover, rather than formalize racial exclusion via state institutions, elites in Latin American states extended formal citizenship to subordinate groups, even though these groups continued to be marginalized informally.[12]

Yet *mestizaje* was never simply an elite-centered state project (Wade 2005; Chaves and Zambrano 2006). Rather, it was an ideology built through both top-down and bottom-up processes and one that became meaningful for people on the ground. Among other things, *mestizaje* strongly shaped racial and national identities (Wade 2005; Alberto 2011). Beyond identifying with the idea that everyone was mixed, Latin Americans often felt deeply that their societies were indeed racially egalitarian and not stratified by race.

Nevertheless, like any nationalist project, this one was plagued with irreconcilable internal contradictions. First was the irony of constructing a raceless nation through the deeply racialized process of mixing "races." The second problem had to do with the silences inherent to such a project. While most Latin American countries can be said to have three roots—European, indigenous, and African—they included these ancestries in the discourse of the *mestizo* nation selectively (Wade 1997). In Mexico, for example, elites developed a national identity based on the idea of a *mestizo*, or white/indigenous mix, which conveniently left out the fact that in the early part of the seventeenth century, Mexico imported more enslaved Africans than any other country in the world (Andrews 2004).

Beyond the issue of invisibilization was that of hierarchy. Even when countries celebrated both indigenous and African "culture" and "blood"—as Brazil and Venezuela did—they still emphasized their evolution toward whiteness (Wright 1990; Wade 1997; Telles 2004). They expressed this in many ways, including nationalist narratives that exalted a valiant and noble indigenous past while emphasizing the industriousness and capacity that came with their European heritage. In this way, narratives of nation painted a past that was indigenous/African, and the future was inevitably whiter, more European. The project also entailed intentional processes of cultural genocide and violent assimilation.[13] Ultimately, though, these ideas were not drummed up solely

within Latin America, but rather reflected increasingly "scientific" thinking in Europe in the early part of the twentieth century (Stepan 1991; Skidmore 1993; De la Fuente 2001; Fitzgerald and Cook-Martín 2014; Loveman 2014). Such conceptions equated European culture and blood with modernity and portrayed Africans and indigenous peoples as inherently backward.

A final tension came from the persistence of ethno-racial inequalities, a phenomenon that was greatly at odds with the idea that these countries were racially egalitarian. Latin American states did not always collect ethno-racial data in their national censuses, as the collection of such data ran counter to the ideal of the culturally homogeneous and racially mixed nation (Loveman 2014). However, the availability of new data has given much empirical evidence that these societies continue to be stratified by race, language, and skin color.[14] For example, we know that today indigenous people are much more likely than nonindigenous people to live in poverty and to work in the informal sector; their children are also more likely to work than their nonindigenous counterparts (Hall and Patrinos 2006). In Brazil—the only country besides Cuba to consistently collect data on blacks and mixed-race people over the last century—whites had higher incomes, higher levels of education, and better health outcomes than nonwhites (Telles 2004). Furthermore, in 2005, black Colombians were nearly twice as likely to be impoverished; their infant mortality rate was twice as high, and they had much shorter life expectancy than the rest of the population (Barbary and Urrea 2004; Rodriguez et al. 2008).

Given these many contradictions, scholars have argued that rather than build racially egalitarian societies, Latin American elites simply created a more hegemonic and durable form of racial domination than their counterparts had in the United States or South Africa (Hanchard 1994; Marx 1998; Winddance Twine 1998; Winant 2001; Goldberg 2002; Sawyer 2006). According to these accounts, nationalist discourses of race mixture—insomuch as they relied on the logic of colorblindness and the silencing of racial critique—have often served to mask the reality of continued racism and structural inequality. It comes as something of a surprise then that nearly every Latin American country would change course so dramatically with respect to ethno-racial questions beginning in the late 1980s. In some cases, this shift also meant that state officials would recognize the persistence of racism within their societies for the first time in their histories.

MULTICULTURAL CONSTITUTIONALISM

Over the last few decades, Latin America underwent a number of radical transformations from authoritarian regimes to democratic ones, from interventionist to neoliberal economic policies and from citizenship regimes

based on *mestizaje* to regimes that recognized the pluri-ethnic nature of their societies. The last shift is best captured in the plethora of Latin American constitutions that recognized the specific rights of indigenous peoples, and, in some cases, black communities as well. These reforms went beyond symbolic recognition and promised to guarantee these groups the rights to collective territory, natural resources, and alternative development. If fully implemented, they also threatened to restrain unfettered capital and thus to profoundly change the hegemonic model of development operating in these countries at the time.

Many Latin American states also mandated overhauling national education curricula to include the study of indigenous and black history. In some cases, they also passed affirmative action policies, in the areas of education and even in political office. These policies had the potential to challenge dominant narratives of race and nation, and in cases like Brazil, of radically changing the color of the middle class. They also meant that Latin American states had to institutionalize new types of ethno-racial political subjects through changes to the law and with the collection of ethno-racial statistics.[15] In this period, states throughout the region began to institutionalize new forms of political participation as well as create new state bureaucracies. In some cases this entailed reforming existing institutions such as those that had been charged since the 1950s and 1960s with "Indian affairs." In others, states created from scratch new national, regional, and state-level agencies to guarantee ethnic rights and to coordinate the implementation of these new policies. This all amounted to a reconfiguration of Latin American states' orientation toward ethno-racial questions, and arguably their very model of citizenship.

While this transition constituted a significant shift in the "Indian question"—from trusteeship to formal autonomy, from veiled assimilation to cultural pluralism—it represented a much more decisive break with the past for these countries' black populations. Indeed, throughout Latin America, blacks and indigenous peoples had very different legal statuses vis-à-vis citizenship regimes. Whereas many countries had treated unassimilated indigenous people as "savages" or "uncivilizable" de facto sovereigns within their borders, they largely treated blacks in legal terms as ordinary citizens, presumed fully assimilated into the *mestizo* nation (Wade 1997). So while the move from *mestizaje* to multiculturalism did constitute a real change for indigenous communities, for blacks it represented a colossal shift. It marked the first time they would begin to engage with the state not only as individual citizens, but also as the subjects of collective rights.

The adoption of specific policies for black populations throughout Latin America, then, presents a profound challenge to how we have long thought about the role of race and ethnicity in political life in this region. In the decades leading up to the reforms, neither scholars who defended *mestizaje*

nor those who challenged it predicted these kinds of transformations. This is, in part, because neither expected social movements or policies based on black identity to have much traction in these cases, albeit for very different reasons. While *mestizaje* advocates saw race-based movements and rights as having no place in these already racially egalitarian societies, scholars who critiqued *mestizaje* often argued that such ideologies had made the development of oppositional racial consciousness nearly impossible and large-scale black mobilization unlikely.[16] So how do we explain the emergence of ethno-racial rights in Latin America over the last few decades, and particularly the inclusion of black populations in these reforms?

EXPLAINING ETHNO-RACIAL POLICY IN LATIN AMERICA

One possible cause might be found in international factors.[17] Throughout Latin America, multicultural reforms happened on the heels of devastating neoliberal reforms that increased poverty and inequality. These policies also intensified land dispossession and prompted state intervention in indigenous communities that had previously been somewhat autonomous (Yashar 2005). Hale (2002) has argued that these worsening conditions catalyzed the domestic and transnational indigenous mobilization that led to multicultural reforms. Moreover, international factors may have had the same impact as they have had in other rights-based struggles in Latin America. Namely, the international may have expressed itself through the diffusion of international norms around human rights, through the direct influence of international actors, or by the use of transnational strategies among ethno-racial movements in these countries.[18]

Beyond the empirical question of how international factors mattered in the adoption of specific policies for black populations in Latin America is the normative question of how we should understand such influence. Were international forces positive in that they ushered in more egalitarian citizenship regimes where those based in *mestizaje* had failed? Alternatively, was international influence pernicious? Was the move to ethno-racial policy the result of U.S. cultural imperialism, and thus, profoundly at odds with local realities, as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1999) have argued?[19]

In this book, I approach these questions head on. In so doing, I do not assume that particular international dynamics or actors are at play a priori, but rather, I treat this as an empirical question. Through careful archival analysis and the use of ethnographic methods, I ask a number of specific questions about the role of international factors. For instance, were U.S. scholars and foundations so powerful, and how exactly did they change racial discourse in Brazil so dramatically? Moreover, if the United States exported racial discourse and policy to these countries, how do we account for

all of the variation in the region? Additionally, why would U.S. foundations and academics have so much influence in Brazil but not its neighboring countries? In relative terms, Brazil is more economically powerful, has a far more developed academic sector, is infamous for its entrenched culture of insularity, and has historically been far less susceptible to U.S. influence than the rest of Latin America. More importantly, the assumption that particular models were either exported or diffused from one place to another fails to explain a question that is at the center of this book: Why have black populations become institutionalized as culturally distinct rural political subjects in some cases and as culturally integrated urban populations, defined by their experience of systematic racial discrimination, in others?

It is precisely this variation in the extent and nature of ethno-racial reforms in Latin American countries that has led some scholars to locate their seeds not in the international, but in domestic political processes, particularly in black mobilization (Grueso et al. 1997; Martins et al. 2004; Telles 2004; Hooker 2005; Asher 2009).[20] While these accounts are convincing, they defy nearly everything we know about social movements. In neither Colombia nor Brazil did black movements have the characteristics—resources, organizational strength, mobilizational capacity, elite alliances, or favorable public opinion—that we would have expected them to have to bring about these major political changes.[21] How, then, were they ultimately so successful? Before I address this puzzle, I want to say more about why my comparative framework is best suited for taking it on.

WHY COLOMBIA? WHY BRAZIL? WHY COMPARE?

In some ways, Colombia and Brazil are obvious choices for an analysis of black rights in Latin America. Aside from being among the first in the region to enact multicultural constitutions that recognized black communities, they also have the first and third largest Afro-descendant populations in the Americas (Telles 2007).[22] According to Brazil's 2010 census, 54 percent of the country's 190 million people identified as either *preto* ("black") or *pardo* ("brown"). While the "official" state count of Colombia's black population varies widely from 1.5 to 26 percent of the population, the figure most widely used comes from the 2005 census in which 10.6 percent of Colombians identified as Afro-descendant.[23] As a result, policies aimed at Afro-descendants stood to apply to many more people in Colombia and Brazil than they did in other countries in the region.

More interestingly, however, are the reforms the Colombian and Brazilian states actually underwent. *Mestizaje* began to lose ground as a state project throughout Latin America as countries began adopting ethno-racial

TABLE 1.1: ETHNO-RACIAL LEGISLATION IN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

	1987–1998[1]		2001–PRESENT
Cuba	No specific legislation for indigenous or black populations		
Dominican Republic			
El Salvador			
Argentina	Recognition of indigenous rights		
Chile			
Costa Rica			
Mexico			
Panama			
Paraguay			
Peru			
Uruguay			
Venezuela			
Bolivia		Recognition of rights for subsets of black population	
Ecuador			
Guatemala			
Honduras			
Nicaragua			
Colombia			Robust racial equality policies
Brazil			

[1] Bolivia (2009) is one of the only countries where these changes were incorporated outside this period.

legislation in the 1980s. Even so, there was a great deal of variation in the degree and type of reforms. First, countries differed with regard to who was included in and who was excluded from ethno-racial reforms (Hooker 2005). Table 1.1 outlines some of these important differences. Of the nineteen countries in Latin America, nearly all recognized the rights of indigenous peoples (column 1) and about half also recognized specific sectors within the black population, typically rural and geographically concentrated communities

like those on the Atlantic Coasts of Central America and the Pacific Coast of Colombia (column 2).[24] After this initial round of multicultural reforms of the 1990s, countries throughout Latin America began to adopt a series of reforms aimed at racial equality, most of which happened in the wake of the 2001 Third World Conference against Racism held in Durban, South Africa.

If we take these temporal and substantive distinctions between these multicultural and racial equality policies seriously, Colombia and Brazil are particularly interesting cases both for their similarities and their differences. While many countries in Latin America underwent both rounds of reforms, Colombia and Brazil adopted the most comprehensive policies. Brazil's first recognition of black rights involved guaranteeing black rural communities—namely *quilombo*, or "maroon," communities—the right to territorial and cultural rights.[25] Some fifteen years after the signing of a new constitution, the Brazilian state began to adopt affirmative action policies that were unparalleled in Latin America. During this period, the government also began to proactively address racial inequality across a number of policy areas, including health and education. As it expanded such policies, it did so in the language of promoting racial equality.

Similarly, the first wave of reforms for black populations came just after Colombia's 1991 constitutional reform. After passing the Law of Black Communities in 1993, the state began to aggressively implement multicultural policies. In so doing, officials typically defined black communities as rural communities living on Colombia's Pacific Coast. As such, the 1990s and early 2000s marked a period of contention as black urban organizations attempted to expand existing legislation to include urban blacks, and those living outside of the Pacific Coast. Partly in response to this pressure, the Colombian state began to flirt with broadening the legal definition of blackness through a number of constitutional court rulings, the 2005 census, and a number of policies with the stated aim of "equal opportunity" for "Afro-Colombians."

Despite similar trajectories, Colombia and Brazil are interesting cases of ethno-racial legislation because of their differences. As the images of Afro-Colombians with marimbas and Afro-Brazilians with statistics in hand underscores, the dominant discourse of black rights in Colombia has been one of collective territorial rights, rural black communities, and the "right to difference," whereas "racial equality" and a focus on urban black populations saturated Brazil's political field. In Colombia, this black political subject has come to be embodied in the figure of the rural black farmer from the Pacific Coast, whereas in Brazil it is personified in urban disenfranchised blacks.

It was these differences that first led me to this research project. I was interested in comparing these two countries with similar nationalist narra-

tives and that had adopted ethno-racial legislation, but where very different conceptions of a black political subject had taken hold. This comparative approach gives me analytic leverage that examining a single case would not have.[26] First, it allows me to uncover these two overlapping discourses of blackness that have become institutionalized. Making this distinction between state policies that seek to protect the culture of ethnic minorities (the right to difference) and those that emphasize the need to combat racism (the right to equality), is important not only for understanding the nature of this region's ethno-racial reforms, but also their causes. I argue that these different emphases have less to do with demographic realities of the two countries and more with how blackness was politicized in each case. Finally, in comparing these two canonical cases, I am better able to tease out the relative importance of domestic and international dynamics in the shift to black rights in Latin America more generally.

POLITICAL FIELD ALIGNMENTS AND THE MAKING OF BLACK POLITICAL SUBJECTS

This book examines two interrelated phenomena that I argue constitute the making of black political subjects. First, I analyze how the state and other powerful political actors came to see blackness as a legitimate political category, however incomplete and fraught, in Colombia and Brazil. I take as a point of departure the idea that black identities—and the movements based on those identities—do not automatically flow from slavery or anti-black racism. I draw on theorists who avoid these essentialist accounts of race as well as purely instrumentalist ones. Ethno-racial identities do not simply appear out of thin air either. Instead they often have some historical, material, and even cultural basis. In this sense, I treat ethno-racial identities as Murray Li (2000) does in her work on indigeneity in Indonesia, as "contingent products of agency and the cultural and political work of articulation" (151). This anti-essentialist way of thinking about identity and political struggle also recognizes that identity is itself inherently multiple. People are never exclusively or singularly black, but rather inhabit many social locations simultaneously (Cohen 1999; Collins 1999; Wright 2004).

This book is not about a politicized black consciousness that always existed, nor is it about a sudden "awakening" of black consciousness among the Brazilian and Colombian masses. Rather, it focuses on the circumstances that allowed for a unified discourse of a black political subject to be "forged" or "made," as cultural theorist Stuart Hall has proposed we examine (Hall 1986). Following this call, I analyze the local and global political processes through which Colombians and Brazilians have come to articulate these politicized black identities over the last few decades.

Very early on in my fieldwork, as I sifted through the archives and spoke with key political actors, I knew that black activists would be the main protagonists of this work. They showed up prominently in the historical records of the constitutional reform process in each country, and they also cropped up often in my interviews with politicians, state bureaucrats, and academics involved in these political processes. In fact, black activists seemed to not only be the main catalysts for including black populations in ethno-racial reforms but also critical actors in the implementation process. Despite this, I saw firsthand the collective identity challenges and abysmal resources that continued to plague these organizations. In the context of Colombia's internal war, I also witnessed many black activists who had become my close friends receive death threats; some of them were assassinated for defending the very rights that motivated this study.

Why Brazil and Colombia recognized black rights becomes even more baffling if we consider the material implications of such policies. In granting indigenous and black rural communities the rights to land and precious natural resources like gold, platinum, and silver, these policies not only threatened to reconfigure economic power but also challenged models of development based in accumulation, extraction, and urbanization (Escobar 2008). In Brazil, policies also had the potential to transform patterns of inequality through access to higher education.[27] Thus, several powerful groups in each society had much at stake in debates around black rights. More specifically, affirmative action directly undermined Brazil's white middle class, which depended on prestigious public university slots to reproduce itself. For those who presumed they were the true owners of the land that was to be titled under legislation for *quilombo* communities, these policies threatened their most prized commodity. Relatedly, in Colombia, black rights undermined the bottom lines of mining companies that for decades had used Colombia's Pacific Coast as their profit wonderland. Moreover, by reserving two congressional seats for black communities, the Colombian government threatened to shake up, even if only slightly, political party competition in the country.[28] Given these high stakes, why did Colombia and Brazil adopt policies for black populations? What role did different actors, local and global, play in this process?

I argue that in the absence of extensive resources or massive mobilization, and with serious ideological constraints, black movements in both Colombia and Brazil were at the center of these important political transformations. I suggest that in order to understand their centrality, we must first take as a point of departure a more flexible definition of social movements. In my first visit to Colombia's Chocó region, Zulia Mena—a long-time Afro-Colombian activist and winner of one of the first congressional seats reserved for black leaders—invited me to stay at her home in the city of Quibdó. As she prepared dinner for us, I asked if she considered the black

mobilization that was instrumental in bringing about ethnic reforms in Colombia to be a grassroots movement. She responded:

> Mobilizing a community that's hungry to take up a cause that goes beyond their stomach isn't easy. It's important to have that in mind . . . that this has been a struggle that comes from a place of good intentions, but that the great majority of the Afro-Colombian community has not participated directly in it. It is a progressive movement, the kind you see in history, those great movements that are made up of small groups that create social change. In the end, their efforts are able to serve that broad population (interview, Zulia Mena, August 2006).

Zulia's candidness stood out from the over hundred interviews and thousands of informal conversations I had in Colombia and Brazil in preparation for this book. In contrast, the black activists with whom I spoke were much more likely to characterize their organizations—and the movement more generally—as grassroots, and massive, even if they admitted that there were many challenges to mobilization. In this, they often highlighted certain critical, though extremely rare, moments of street protest—the sit-in at the Haitian embassy in Colombia in the early 1990s, the 1995 Zumbí March for Citizenship and Life in Brazil—rather than their use of bureaucratic strategies, transnational activism, legal mobilization, or efforts to lobby Congress. In responding in this way, activists often privileged the exciting moments of disruptive protest and ignored the more banal, bureaucratic, and less spectacular ways that I will argue activists actually did achieve change in these cases.[29]

In contrast, and more in line with the analysis that Zulia offered that day in her kitchen, I adopt a more malleable definition of social movements. I draw on Charles Tilly's (1999) definition of social movements as a "sustained challenge to power holders in the name of a disadvantaged population living under the jurisdiction of those power holders by means of repeated public displays of that population's worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment" (257). Even while this definition emphasizes the "sustained" and "public" nature of contention, like Zulia, it does not imply that social movements have to be particularly massive, or even engage primarily in street protest, to count as movements, or to bring about change.

With this definition in mind, I treat black mobilization in Colombia and Brazil over the last three decades as constituting a social movement. I suggest that it is only when we situate these movements within a larger constellation of politics—that involves state actors as well as a myriad of different nonstate political actors, local and global—that we are able to explain how they overcame such incredible odds. In this way, I follow the recent shift in the social movement scholarship away from the state-centric idea

of "political opportunity structures" and toward an examination of how context, arena, or fields made up of a plethora of actors shape social movement politics (Ray 1999; Jasper and Goodwin 2011; Jasper 2012; Fligstein and McAdam 2012).

This perspective is part of the political fields approach that I develop, which draws loosely on Bourdieu's idea of fields as well as theories of transnational activism. Bourdieu has long thought about politics in terms of fields, which he saw as made up of a set of forces and defined by the "struggles aimed at transforming the relations" among those forces (Bourdieu 1991, 171). In contrast to some social movement accounts, I do not see state actors and political elites as the creators of a structure of opportunities for movements. Rather, I treat them as one of many actors (albeit powerful ones) within these complex fields of politics.[30] What is more, within any field, the struggle is not only about control over material resources like state power but also over how the "distinctively political game is organized" and who has the "legitimate use of symbolic power" to define the fundamental categories of representation within the field (181). In this sense, I understand social movement politics not only as a process of contentious mobilization, but fundamentally as one of meaning making. In so doing, I do not assume that collective identity and cultural frames simply exist a priori. Rather, I am interested in understanding the construction and legitimation of the very political categories that traditional social movement accounts have often taken as a given.

I also understand political fields to never fully be contained within national borders. Rather, I argue that a degree of permeability allows discourses to interpenetrate and actors from political fields outside the nation-state to have influence. In the case of contestation over ethno-racial rights in Colombia and Brazil, the political game was and continues to be organized at the intersection of a national political field and a more recently consolidated global ethno-racial field. This makes sense when we consider that political struggles in the Global South today are deeply globalized. It follows, then, that resistance to hegemonic understandings of ethno-racial hierarchy and exclusion would also take on a similar character.[31]

I advocate for a translocal approach to understanding the political field, one that gleans insights from scholars of transnational politics. Transnational activism has played a significant role in the emergence of social movements, and in accounting for their effectiveness (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Evans 2000; Kay 2005; Tarrow 2005; Tsutsui and Shin 2008; Merry 2009).[32] Dynamics outside the boundaries of the nation-state—including discursive opportunities that international institutions help to create, the diffusion and translation of global policy norms, and transnational organizing— can all play a critical role in local social movement politics. Scholars have developed concepts such as "international regimes," "global regimes," and

"transnational governance structures" to delineate these otherwise intangible webs of international actors and cultural norms that so deeply influence local politics.[33] Additionally, they have identified the different mechanisms and sets of actors that mediate this diffusion.[34]

Building on this work, I identify the contours of what I call "global political fields," made up of international institutions, transnational networks, global norms, and transnational repertoires of action. This way of understanding global political fields assumes that the field, or arena of politics, is not only defined by a set of people and institutions but is also fundamentally about symbolic power. Indeed, political fields—much like Tania Murray Li's (2000) idea of "spaces of recognition" or David Scott's (2004) "problem-spaces"—can be oriented around specific issues (for example, women's rights, nuclear proliferation, environmental issues, ethnic rights), and they range from incipient to highly consolidated.[35] As we will see in the cases of ethno-racial rights in Colombia and Brazil, the more consolidated the global field, the more likely it was to matter for local struggles.

Most relevant to ethno-racial rights in Brazil and Colombia was a global ethno-racial field that emerged in the last half of the twentieth century. Several crises around the globe—including World War II, apartheid in South Africa, and ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia—prompted a reconsideration of the role the international community should play in domestic ethno-racial conflicts (Kymlicka 2007). In addition, indigenous mobilization and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) specializing in ethnic issues around the world—and in Latin America in particular—helped to initiate a global trend toward thinking about collective rights in ways that did not contradict entirely the liberal framework of human rights (Williams 1990; Felice 1996; Van Cott 2002; Dersso 2010).

In the end, though, the networks, institutions, and cultural practices that made up this global ethno-racial field—or any global field of power for that matter—were rarely self-evident. Rather, global fields tend to articulate themselves in more visible ways in the context of international events like the Third World Conference against Racism held in 2001. As was the case with other international events of this kind, mobilization by activists in the region as well as maneuverings of sympathetic allies within international institutions both played a substantial role in bringing these conferences about (Lennox 2015). These conferences were not only important because they consolidated and physically embodied an otherwise dispersed and unintelligible field. They also served to construct and institutionalize a particular language of ethnic rights, to legitimate expertise around an issue, to solidify transnational alliances to pressure states to make reforms, and, finally, to create legal instruments that were later "vernacularized"—as Merry (2009) terms it—into local struggles.

The political fields in which black movements operated in the 1980s were not only made up of national political elites but also included indigenous activists, transnational human rights workers, environmentalists, anthropologists, and development specialists. Likewise, the discourses that permeated this field were not only local histories and narratives of race and nation, but also global discourses that increasingly linked democracy with anti-racism and multiculturalism. Fields, then, are not only about contestation over material power but also about the power of representation, who defines the language of the debate, and who legitimates categories. In the case of ethno-racial legislation in Colombia and Brazil, symbolic power came just as much from within these nations as from outside. The fact that in Latin America, race/ethnicity has come to be understood as the root of a number of social problems that require state action is as much about domestic political struggles as it about the formal embrace of "multiculturalism" and "social inclusion" by institutions like the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). One need only analyze the text of recent ethno-racial legislation—which closely resembles international conventions much more than domestic law—to see the embodiment of such symbolic power. This all underscores the need to understand the fields in which debates around black rights occurred in Colombia and Brazil over recent decades as simultaneously local and global.

Nevertheless, we must be careful not to conclude that consolidating the global ethno-racial field automatically led to domestic reforms in these cases. The fact that countries like the Dominican Republic and others in the region have not adopted such legislation underscores this. Indeed, being enmeshed in this global ethno-racial political field was no guarantee that the Colombian and Brazilian states would recognize ethnic rights, or that such legislation would venture beyond indigenous populations to include black populations. Rather, I will argue that the making of black rights in these cases required two additional ingredients: radical changes in power relations in the domestic political field; and the existence of black movements poised to take strategic advantage of these changes. I call this convergence of local and global changes "political field alignments."

Political Field Alignments

Global policy norms, transnational activism, and geopolitical dynamics all have profoundly shaped the nature of, and conditions of possibility for, ethno-racial rights in Latin America. However, multicultural reforms in this region have included black populations to varying degrees. This fact calls for a closer examination of why global political fields may have shaped

TABLE I.2. POLITICAL FIELD ALIGNMENTS

	EMERGENT GLOBAL ETHNO-RACIAL POLITICAL FIELD (1960S–EARLY 1980S)	CONSOLIDATED GLOBAL ETHNO-RACIAL POLITICAL FIELD (LATE 1980S–PRESENT)
STABLE DOMESTIC POLITICAL FIELD	Stasis	Misalignment
FRACTURED DOMESTIC POLITICAL FIELD	Domestic transformation	Alignment

domestic struggles more in some cases than they did in others. I argue that political field alignment provides a useful lens through which to understand these dynamics.

Political fields align when the conditions of possibility in global political fields and domestic political fields converge. At such moments, actors articulate and legitimate political struggles that may have otherwise remained at the margins. In table 1.2, I offer a schematic for understanding the alignments that brought about the articulation of ethno-racial rights in Latin America. The first column indicates the relationship between domestic and international politics during the period (1960s–early 1980s) in which global discourses and institutions around anti-racism, multiculturalism, and indigenous rights were incipient. At that time, the field was still not fully consolidated and the most powerful international institutions still showed little interest in multiculturalism. While a consensus was emerging about how to protect indigenous communities in institutions like Cultural Survival, such discussions were not yet consecrated in the form of international legal norms with real symbolic power. Likewise, international institutions dedicated to ethno-racial rights had not yet developed the specific mechanisms necessary for effective transnational activism around these issues. In this sense, this emergent global ethno-racial field had yet to produce the material and symbolic power that it would have in domestic struggles in later decades.

Before the late 1980s, black political organizations in Latin America had to rely nearly exclusively on the conditions of possibility within their domestic political fields, which were characterized by deeply uneven power relations and hegemonic discourses of *mestizaje*. This led to stasis in nearly every Latin American country prior to the 1980s.[36] However, in cases like the Dominican Republic, where the national political field experienced few changes in power relations in the 1990s, ethno-racial reforms did not occur, even with the consolidation of the global ethno-racial field. This

mismatch—between changes in this global political field and persistent limited conditions of possibility within the national political field—created a situation of misalignment.[37]

Rather, in nearly all cases in Latin America, state recognition for black populations required both changes in the national political field and the consolidation of the global ethno-racial field. The kinds of domestic changes needed to radically shift state discourse and policies were often on the scale of what Sawyer (2005) calls "state disequilibrium." In Colombia and Brazil, ethno-racial recognition occurred, as it did throughout much of the region, in the context of widespread popular unrest, the intensification of civil war, and crises of state legitimacy. This disequilibrium led to constitutional reform processes as well as a number of other significant transformations in state institutions, all with the goal of furthering democratization.

Where domestic and global dynamics aligned and black activists mobilized, black recognition was much more likely to happen. However, what ultimately mattered was not the size of these movements but how effectively they mobilized around these alignments, as well as how they conceptualized their struggle. The language of black mobilization and the nature of their claims were especially important because this alignment of political fields did not happen all at once. Instead, I argue that these reforms unfolded in two distinct moments of political field alignment, the multicultural alignment and the racial equality alignment. In each a very different conception of the black political subject became institutionalized.

Multicultural Alignments, Racial Equality Alignments

Existing scholarship tends to collapse policies as collective ethnic rights and race-based affirmative action into a singular "multicultural turn." In contrast, I conceptualize such ethno-racial policies as consisting of two types that I argue were produced through two distinct historical moments: the multicultural alignment and the racial equality alignment. Table 1.3 offers a heuristic—albeit a somewhat crudely drawn one—for thinking about the differences between these two alignments.

First, each alignment focused on a different ideal subject of rights. Whereas the state rooted the policies of the late 1980s and early 1990s in the idea that it needed to protect the culture and autonomy of blacks and indigenous peoples as an ethnic group, it based later policies on the notion that it had a responsibility to combat racism and ensure overall racial equality. While indigenous peoples were the original ideal subjects of the former, blacks were the prototypical beneficiary of the latter. In fact, the idea that the multicultural legislation of the 1990s would also cover certain subsets of the black population came through a contentious process. In the few cases where Latin American political elites could even conceive of specific rights

TABLE 1.3. MULTICULTURAL AND RACIAL EQUALITY ALIGNMENTS

	THE MULTICULTURAL ALIGNMENT (1980S–1990S)	THE RACIAL EQUALITY ALIGNMENT (2000S–2010S)
Types of Reforms	Territorial rights, political autonomy, language rights	Equal opportunity laws, affirmative action policies
Legal/Moral Justification	To protect the culture and identity of minority groups	To combat systematic racial inequality
Type of Claim	Right to difference	Right to equality
Relevant International Norm	ILO Convention 169	CERD, Durban Plan of Action
Subject	Indigenous peoples, rural/ geographically specific black populations	General black population typically with an emphasis on urban issues
Type of Groupness	"Ethnicity" (culture)	"Race" (phenotype)
Expertise	Anthropologists, and to a lesser extent historians	Sociologists/demographers, and to a lesser extent economists
Dominant Discourse	Colombia	Brazil

for black populations in the constitutional reform processes of the 1980s and 1990s, they spoke exclusively in the language of protecting "cultural difference" and local autonomy.

Consequently, only certain segments of the black population qualified. In all countries where they were recognized, it was rural and geographically concentrated black communities that were able to make a somewhat plausible claim to cultural distinction (Hooker 2005). In a sense, certain black populations became "indigenous-like" in the eyes of the Latin American multicultural state, or at the very least, "blackness increasingly look[ed] like indianness," as Wade (1997) has noted.[38] However, as I will show in later chapters, even when multicultural reforms eventually included specific black populations, activists still found it difficult to convince the state and other key actors that they were indeed a culturally distinct group. This framing of blackness as indigenous-like contrasted with the reality of the urban black population, which was more numerous than rural and geographically concentrated blacks in nearly all cases, and which was understood as fully

assimilated into the dominant culture (Wade 1997; Barbary and Urrea 2004; Paschel 2010).[39]

In contrast to the multicultural alignment, black populations—not indigenous peoples—were the natural subjects of the racial equality alignment.[40] These two alignments also relied on different types of expertise. Whereas with the multicultural alignment, anthropological expertise was used to authenticate cultural difference, the racial equality alignment was premised on the expertise of sociologists, typically those specializing in inequality. Another key distinction was that in both Brazil and Colombia, at each moment of alignment, different kinds of black organizations were often at the forefront of the struggle. In the multicultural alignment, incipient rural black organizations took center stage, while urban black organizations that had been mobilized for decades, and that used the language of racism and racial equality, were pushed aside.

The tables turned with the racial equality alignment a decade later, when black urban organizations succeeded in pressuring the Brazilian state, and to a lesser extent the Colombian one, to adopt policies aimed at racial integration and black mobility. These differences between the multicultural and racial equality alignments also played out with the taking up of different international norms. Rural black movements in Colombia and Brazil tended to see International Labour Organisation Convention 169 (1989) on Indigenous People and Tribal Groups as foundational. Approved in 1989, it outlined the language of indigenous rights that best reflected the kinds of demands that indigenous communities around the world were making on their respective states: the right to territory, sovereignty, natural resources, and prior consultation.[41] Urban black movements, on the other hand, often saw themselves as fighting against racism and for racial equality. As such, they looked to the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the Durban Plan of Action for leverage.

The flattening out of these two historically specific moments of ethnoracial reforms in Latin America, as well as the conflation between the different logics embedded in them, is most evident when we use a comparative lens.[42] This is because the logic of the multicultural alignment became much more saturated in the political field of Colombia, whereas the language of the racial equality alignment tended to dominate the black movement's and the state's discourse in Brazil. *Becoming Black Political Subjects* compares these two alignments both within and between these two significant cases of ethno-racial reforms in Latin America. Doing so allows me to consider why the logic of the multicultural alignment gained so much sway in Colombia and not in Brazil, while the opposite was true of the racial equality alignment. There is no obvious reason why this would be the case. Perhaps Colombia's black population was largely rural and Brazil's

mostly urban. In fact, about 70 percent of the Afro-descendant population in both countries reside in urban areas.[43]

Similarly, one might speculate that black Colombians retained more distinctively African cultural practices than Brazilians did. If anything, the reverse was true. In fact, Brazil is arguably the country in the Americas with the highest degree of African cultural retention, from African-based religions like Candomblé to African influence in Brazilian Portuguese and in the country's culinary traditions (Freyre 1933). Furthermore, over the last decades, black movements in both countries have made claims using both the language of racial equality and that of cultural difference. So what accounts for these differences? I argue that the Colombian state tended to institutionalize the logic of cultural difference and Brazil the logic of racial equality for two reasons: the different ways in which blackness figured into each country's nationalist imaginary and differences in the articulations of black movements in each case.[44]

Thus far I have talked exclusively about the making of black political subjects defined as the political process that led to the adoption of specific legislation for black populations. However, this book is also about the making of black political subjects in a second sense—that is, through the everyday, ongoing, and often ambiguous political practices that have unfolded in the wake of these policies. I ask how do black activists navigate this new political moment where they no longer confront states that are deaf to ethnoracial issues, but rather states that have institutionalized black rights, formalized black participation, and incorporated activists themselves. I suggest that these dynamics of institutionalization are directly related to the more fundamental question of whether these moments of alignment have actually brought about material change in the lives of people on the ground. In taking on this question, I show how the making of black political subjects was also accompanied by a process of their unmaking. Indeed, just as the Brazilian and Colombian states began to adopt ethno-racial legislation, the increasing institutionalization and fragmentation of black organizations—as well as the emergence of reactionary movements—intervened to both refashion and restrict such rights.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

In the rest of this book, I trace the making of black political subjects in Colombia and Brazil over the last two decades. In chapter 2, I use mainly secondary literature to analyze the historical context of the domestic fields in which black movements emerged. My aims are twofold, to highlight the magnitude of this shift from *mestizaje* to black rights and also to begin to

explain why different conceptions of blackness became institutionalized in each case. In this chapter, I also situate the two states' ideologies of race-making within a broader political field. In chapter 3, I draw on archives and interviews to better understand the ideological terrain of the political fields of Colombia and Brazil during the period directly preceding the multicultural alignment. In addition, I show how black activists organized—as blacks but also around other political categories—in a field dominated by ideas of what Goldberg (2002) calls "racelessness."

Chapters 4 and 5 develop my concept of political field alignment by examining the political processes that led to the initial recognition of black rights in Colombia and Brazil in the 1980s and 1990s and the subsequent adoption of policies in the 2000s and 2010s. In chapter 4, I analyze the multicultural alignment. In it, I draw on interviews with key actors as well as constitutional assembly transcripts to examine the conditions under which each state recognized specific black populations in their new constitutions. Chapter 5 turns to the racial equality alignment, where I analyze how and why the Colombian and Brazilian states passed laws, including affirmative action and other policies more explicitly focused on promoting racial equality. I argue that while black movements had pushed for these kinds of policies since at least the 1980s, their efforts were emboldened at the beginning of the twenty-first century by international events. Because the multicultural alignment became the dominant way of framing black rights in Colombia, I pay more attention to that case in chapter 4, while the Brazilian case is the main focus of chapter 5. Taken together, these chapters suggest the need to complicate the notion of the multicultural turn at the same time they strongly challenge the idea that blackness became politicized in these countries as a result of U.S. imperialism.

In chapters 6 and 7, I engage in a more ethnographic examination of the making and unmaking of black political subjects. Chapter 6 reveals the ways in which black activists and organizations navigate these new political fields where state institutions have enshrined particular types of black political subjects. In both countries, recent legislation required the state to create internal spaces to guarantee black political participation and to ensure the full implementation of newly adopted legislation. I analyze the nature of these state structures and the ways in which black activists and their organizations have become institutionalized within them. In chapter 7, the final empirical chapter of the book, I examine the extent to which the Colombian and Brazilian states have actually implemented ethno-racial reforms. I argue that the dynamics of black movement institutionalization that I explored in the previous chapter, as well as the emergence of powerful reactionary actors—including transnational mining companies, armed groups, white/*mestizo* landowners, and the white urban middle class—have made implementing ethno-racial policy in these countries a difficult task.

I show how this reconfiguration of the political field helps to make sense of this unmaking of black rights in these cases.

Finally, in chapter 8, I move toward a broader discussion of the contributions this book offers to the study social movements and to scholars of race and ethnicity. In it, I argue that when we theorize up from noncanonical cases—like the ones I examine here—it forces us to move toward more globally embedded accounts of both race making and social movement politics. At the same time, these cases also push us toward conceptualizing "blackness," "social movements," and "power" in much more complex ways.

A NOTE ON ETHNO-RACIAL TERMINOLOGY

Before continuing, I want to clarify the ethno-racial terminology I use throughout the rest of this book. Those familiar with Latin America know one cannot take ethno-racial categories for granted in this region. Among other things, scholars have highlighted the existence of an elaborate racial/color continuum in these countries, rather than finite and clearly demarcated racial groups. However, because this study analyzes the making of new black political subjects within a specific realm—that is, within social movements and the Colombian and Brazilian states—I did not encounter the same kinds of ethno-racial ambiguity that scholars who have examined how race is made through everyday social practices have found. In fact, in the research sites where I did my work, only a few ethno-racial categories emerged as important.[45] Thus, I pay more attention to how the various actors involved in these political processes used ethno-racial terms—including how Brazilian and Colombian law conceived of these categories—than how these terms mapped onto the categories used in everyday social praxis. That is not to say that I was uninterested in the relationship between political and social processes; I do touch on this at different points in the manuscript.[46]

Relatedly, I tend to use the term "black" rather than "Afro-Colombian" or "Afro-Brazilian."[47] When I first got to the field I found that while international agencies, professionalized black organizations, and, increasingly, the state tended to use these interchangeably, the activists I knew rarely used these terms.[48] Black movements in both Colombia and Brazil had long struggled to promote a sense of "black" identity rather than "Afro-descendant identity." That said, things began to change while I was conducting research as more and more actors began using some variation of "afro." At important moments actors did contest the boundaries around these different categories. I highlighted these moments of contestation when they did emerge.[49]

Ultimately, my goal in this book is to do what qualitative social science research does best, which is to understand social processes in ways that take

seriously the meaning and categories that people themselves use to make sense of their worlds. In the cases I explore here, this means developing a deep understanding of how activists, intellectuals, and state officials understood the political fields in which they were embedded.

Translating ethno-racial categories from Spanish and Portuguese into English is always complicated, especially since Brazilians use two words that both translate to "black" in English: *preto* (the color black; this term refers to the darkest Brazilians); and *negro* (a more political term for racial identity that includes both *pretos* and *pardos*, or mixed-race Brazilians).[50] I translate the word *negro* to "black" whether I am talking about the Colombian or the Brazilian context. While I also translate *preto* to "black," I highlight the occasions in which political actors use that term as something distinct from *negro*. More generally, when an appropriate English equivalent exists, I use it and the Spanish or Portuguese word interchangeably (for example, *mulato* and mulatto, or *pardo* and brown). When there is no English equivalent—as is the case with the Spanish word for those of mixed European and indigenous ancestry, *mestizo*—I leave the word in its original language.

My use of the terms race and ethnicity also merits some discussion. I prefer to use the term "ethno-racial" so as not to reify what I consider a problematic and analytically slippery distinction between race and ethnicity.[51] The idea that race and ethnicity capture very distinct types of difference is pervasive in the academic literature as well as common sense understandings. Yet we know that both "race" and "ethnicity" are often used to refer to perceived biological and cultural differences. Further, the boundaries around each are socially constructed and both have been used to justify hierarchy, violence, and atrocities rooted in often essentialist ideas of human difference.[52] In my refusal to make this analytic distinction, I am acutely aware of the fact that ethno-racial difference can at certain times be more marked and experienced more viscerally in the body than at others; I just don't believe that this requires us to continue to operate with the idea that race and ethnicity, or race and culture, are entirely distinct social phenomena.

That said, the distinction between blackness as culturally defined (think ethnicity) and blackness as racially defined (think phenotype, biology, ancestry) is very important to the political processes I examine here. I show how the idea that these definitions constitute different kinds of groupness has led states, academics, activists, and international experts to, at crucial moments, treat this blurry distinction between race and ethnicity as a very real difference. I also show how this has had material consequences for the people who are thought to inhabit these different types of difference. While I use the term "ethno-racial" throughout this book, I am still interested in the political and material consequences of the use of the terms "race" versus "ethnicity."

Finally, I refrain from using quotation marks around the words "race," "ethnicity," and "ethno-racial" not only because it would annoy some readers, but more importantly because I believe doing so would be redundant. Many of the categories that social scientists use are socially constructed (including categories such as "gender," but also more seemingly "real" concepts such as "class" or "the state"). This social construction is precisely what makes these topics interesting. However, one unintended consequence of placing quotation marks around the term "race"—but not other words like "ethnicity"—is that scholars ultimately reify these other socially constructed categories. Rather than fixate about quotation marks, I believe that our more fundamental aim should be to simply do the kind of constructivist work that the quotation marks are meant to do.