

Afro-Descendants in Latin America: How Many?

“We consider it essential for all countries in the region of the Americas and all other areas of the African Diaspora to recognize the existence of their population of African descent and the cultural, economic, political and scientific contributions made by that population, and recognize the persistence of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance that specifically affect them, and recognize that, in many countries, their long-standing inequality in terms of access to, *inter alia*, education, health care and housing has been a profound cause of the socio-economic disparities that affect them.”

Declaration of the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Durban, South Africa - 2001, Paragraph #33.



Race Report



“ Afro-descendants
 comprise
 approximately
 30% of the
 population
 of Latin
 America. ”

Census data provide policy makers an essential tool for designing and assessing policies. Few countries of the hemisphere provide a reliable count of their population of African descent. This poses an obstacle to sound analysis and policy formulation. The map on the cover of this report brings together the best numbers available on Afro-Latin Americans and attempts to advance the efforts of past population estimates, especially the study by Bello and Rangel*. Our figures, however, also leave much room for improvement as we had to resort to the CIA *World Factbook* population estimates and other secondary sources for many countries that do not collect their own

statistics on race or have not made them publicly accessible. In light of the wide array of terms employed by countries of the region for racial classification, we follow the convention established by various international forums, especially the UN World Conference Against Racism, in applying the term “Afro-descendant” to that segment of the population with African ancestry. In presenting these figures, we join others, such as the *Todos Contamos* project sponsored by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, in encouraging the countries of Latin America to recognize and count their Afro-descendant populations.

Source Information for Racial Demographics

* Bello, A. and Rangel, M. *Etnicidad, “Raza” y Equidad en América Latina y el Caribe*. Santiago: CEPAL. 2000.

GOVERNMENT SOURCES:

- **Belize**, Central Statistical Office of Belize, Table B1, “Total Population by Ethnicity and Sex for Major Divisions,” received electronically per request.
- **Bolivia**, Instituto Nacional de Estadística de Bolivia, Cuadro No 3.01.20 1999-2000, <http://www.ine.gov.bo>.
- **Brazil**, Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, Censo Demográfico - 2000 <http://www.ibge.gov.br>.
- **Colombia**, Departamento Nacional de Planeación de Colombia, Comisión Para la Formulación del Plan Nacional de Desarrollo de la Población Afrocolombiana, “Hacia una Nación Pluriétnica y Multicultural” Bogotá, D.C. Diciembre de 1998.
- **Costa Rica**, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos de Costa Rica, Censo 2000, <http://www.inec.go.cr>.
- **Jamaica**, Interview with Merville Anderson of Statistical Institute of Jamaica, numbers taken from 1991 Census.

SECONDARY SOURCES:

- **Antigua and Barbuda (1970), Dominica (1981), Saint Kitts and Nevis (1980)**, US Census Bureau, International Data Base, <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbnew.html>
- **Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominican Republic, French Guiana, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, St Vincent & Grenadines, Santa Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay**: CIA World Factbook 2002
- **Ecuador, Venezuela**, Minorities at Risk Project, University of Maryland, 1998, <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/about.htm>
- **Guyana**, Mejía, J. and Moncada, G., “Las variables de etnia y raza en las encuestas de hogares en América Latina y el Caribe,” presented at “Todos Contamos. Los Grupos Étnicos en los Censos” in Cartagena, Colombia, November 7 - 10, 2000 based on 1999 household survey.
- **Peru**, World Bank Report No 19867-PE, January 5, 2000.

Dialogue on Race

The Inter-American Dialogue considers the social exclusion of Latin Americans of African descent to be one of the most pressing policy and development issues of the hemisphere. The objective of the Dialogue's program on race is twofold. We seek, first, to raise the visibility of Afro-Latin populations, their inferior living conditions, and the effects of racial discrimination; and, second, to promote the incorporation of race related concerns in the development policy agenda of governments and international cooperation agencies. Ultimately, the program strives to strengthen the socio-economic and political participation of Afro-descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, the race program aims to be an independent source of information, analysis, and ideas on issues affecting Afro-Latin Americans. In June 2000, the Dialogue joined several other institutions working on issues of race in the Americas to form the Inter-Agency Consultation on Race in Latin America (IAC). This forum serves as a mechanism for participating organizations and other relevant groups to share information and analyses on the status of Afro-Latin Americans, and fosters dialogue between these groups and their Latin American counterparts. With this publication we intend to disseminate information on Afro-Latin populations, as well as on recent program activities regarding Afro-Latin Americans.

Program Activities

Affirmative Action

This past November the Inter-American Dialogue's race program organized a discussion on affirmative action initiatives with presentations by Robert Cottrell of George Washington University Law School and Charles Moore Wed-

Letter from the Director

It gives me great pleasure to release this report on the race program at the Inter-American Dialogue and the Inter-Agency Consultation on Race in Latin America (IAC). We hope to summarize some of the work that has been done so far, as well as raise awareness about race among the larger policy community concerned with Latin America.

In June 2001, I was delighted to join the Dialogue as the first executive director of the IAC. Since then I have worked to foster communication and collaboration among the IAC participating institutions, and thereby lay the foundation for a full range of program activities to intensify ties between Afro-Latin American leaders and groups and Washington policy institutions. We hope to further deepen our channels of communication by releasing a regular newsletter in the near future.

In the aftermath of the World Conference Against Racism there has been an increase in the debate regarding the Afro-Latin population. In this context, the IAC can be instrumental in advancing the discussion of policies that address the living conditions of Afro-Latin Americans.

I trust that our informed exchanges on race-based policies have raised policy makers' awareness of racial inequalities in Latin America and have contributed to the debate on how to confront them. I am equally convinced, however, that the IAC's promising start serves mainly to highlight the vast work that remains to be done before Latin Americans can begin to enjoy racial equality and social justice.

Luiz Barcelos
Director, Inter-American Dialogue
Race Program and IAC

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“ Human rights groups are well placed to help confront issues of racial discrimination in Latin America. ”

derburn of the University of the West Indies. Both speakers were encouraged by the increased visibility of affirmative action in Brazil—in the media and as proposed by state and federal legislation—both because of the implications the policy holds for the sizable Afro-Brazilian population and the example it sets for the rest of Latin America.

Robert Cottroll explained his study of six Latin American countries and the role of law in combating patterns of social exclusion and structural inequality. Although all countries formally mandate equality under law, racial inequalities persist. Cottroll argued that private law suits are potentially more effective tools than criminalization for tackling discrimination. He also analyzed university curriculums in Latin America and highlighted the absence of classes on human and civil rights especially regarding racial and ethnic groups.

Charles Moore Wedderburn directs a CARICOM-sponsored exchange program between Caribbean and Brazilian students. He offered his work as an example of the sort of hemispheric cooperation that could help Afro-descendants build a common agenda. Wedderburn also discussed the complexities associated with racial self-identification. He noted that the UN World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in Durban, South Africa was successful merely by virtue of having raised the taboo issue on the international stage. The Dialogue race program has commissioned and will soon release three studies on affirmative action in Brazil.

On Capitol Hill

On November 13, the Dialogue race program organized a meeting on Capitol Hill to find ways to bring serious and sustained U.S. congressional attention to issues of race and discrimination

in Latin America. Some 25 people participated in the meeting, including staff from the offices of Representatives Donald Payne (D-NJ), John Conyers (D-Mich), and Cynthia McKinney (D-GA), and from a range of non-governmental organizations. Participants noted the challenge of tying the Afro-Latin American issue to the interests of black and Hispanic constituents of U.S. Congress members. Some suggested that the exceptional inequalities confronting Afro-Latin American women, in particular, might command the attention of U.S. Congresswomen. Participants recommended that the IAC continue its efforts to organize meetings among members of Congress and visiting Afro-Latin American political leaders. In addition, participants agreed on the potential value of a race-oriented congressional delegation to Brazil and other countries with significant Afro-Latin American populations.

Law, Human Rights, and Race

Human rights groups have proven very successful at advancing social justice throughout Latin America. Given their extensive experience, outreach, and influence, they are well placed to help confront issues of racial discrimination, as well. In an effort to encourage human rights activists to address racial discrimination, the Dialogue convened a meeting in April on Law, Human Rights, and Race in Latin America. More than 30 people from some sixteen institutions participated in the discussion led by Gastón Chillier, Latin American program coordinator at the International Human Rights Law Group; Ariel Dulitzky, chief expert for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States (OAS); and Macarena Tamayo-Calabrese, director of the Latin America Legal Initiative Council of the American Bar Association. Chillier and

Dulitzky described how their organizations advance the issue of race in Latin America. Dulitzky highlighted the importance of actively engaging civil society and the need to train Afro-Latin groups to access the Inter-American Commission. Tamayo-Calabrese described the American Bar Association's mandate to address racial discrimination in Latin America and how lessons from other successful programs, such as educational workshops for judges and human rights indexes, can be employed by proponents of racial equity.

U.S. Civil Rights Groups

On June 6, the Dialogue's race program organized a meeting with representatives of U.S. civil rights groups and African-American organizations to explore ways to develop relationships between these groups and their Latin American counterparts. While communication among Afro-descendant groups throughout the hemisphere has increased in recent years, interaction has been sporadic and has not yielded many meaningful partnerships. Participants noted the benefits of hemispheric cooperation among Afro-descendants and expressed their interest in working with Afro-Latin American groups. The Dialogue pledged to organize meetings among the representatives of U.S. groups and the Afro-Latin American leaders it brings to Washington. The meeting brought to light the potential for collaboration with the United Negro College Fund Special Programs Corporation, which has become increasingly involved in Latin America.

Inter-Agency Consultation on Race in Latin America (IAC)

The IAC, established a little over two years ago, is a consultative group of international development institutions (including the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Pan-American Health Organization, Inter-American Foundation, and Ford and Rockefeller Foundations) that are working to address issues of race discrimination, social exclusion, and other problems of Afro-descendant populations in Latin America. The IAC was designed to assure that member institutions are well informed about each other's programs and plans; allow its participants to share information and analyses about the situation of Latin Americans of African descent; conduct joint activities of mutual interest; launch independent activities that reinforce and enrich the work of participating organizations; and maintain a dialogue with Afro-Latin American leaders and institutions in the region.

Institutional Developments and Activities

The reasons for establishing the IAC in 2000 were straightforward and powerful.

- Latin America has a large African descendant population. While we note the lamentable dearth of reliable numbers on Afro-descendant populations, the numbers we compiled above report an Afro-Latin American population of some 120 million, or as much as 30 percent of all the region's citizens. That population is, virtually everywhere, the target of racial discrimination and exclusion, suffering great economic and social deprivation in Latin America, and occupying far fewer leadership positions in society. Afro-descendants, in short, face a

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host of special problems and a glaring lack of opportunities.

➤With few exceptions, Latin American governments and international aid organizations (multilateral, bilateral, public and private) have largely ignored race in designing and implementing programs, even though it is obvious to even the most casual observer that race is a key factor in the distribution of income, wealth, and social services in the region. Data on race is still scarce and unreliable in most of Latin America, and there have been few serious efforts to study the needs and challenges confronting Afro-Latin Americans.

➤Despite continuing shortcomings, the international development banks and other aid agencies have begun to seek strategies to address the particular challenges of Afro-descendant groups in Latin America—and some governments seem ready to take action as well. The UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa and the preparatory regional meeting in Santiago, Chile were defining events, raising the level of international awareness on a number of important issues affecting Afro-Latins. In addition to helping connect civil society groups across the region, the events offered these groups an occasion to dialogue with national governments. Santiago and Durban have created new prospects for addressing Afro-Latin issues on a policy level, and the IAC is seeking to take advantage of this opportunity.

The work of the IAC is directed at three audiences. The first audience of the IAC is its member institutions. The international development agencies that make up the IAC use it as a forum to learn from each other's programs, participate in each other's activities, and collaborate

on new initiatives related to Afro-Latins. For these institutions, the lessons and knowledge they gain from the experiences of their IAC colleagues are essential to the effective development of their own activities. Moreover, the staff who participate in the IAC often look to other IAC members for support and reinforcement as they develop their own institution's programs on Afro-Latins.

The second audience the IAC seeks to address is the hemisphere's policymakers, including the U.S. government (especially Congress), Latin American governments, the press, vital non-governmental organizations, and the senior managers of the IAC's member institutions. The role of the IAC is to increase the visibility of race issues, bring them to the attention of these policy groups, encourage decision makers to put race problems prominently on their agendas, and offer practical proposals and ideas on what to do about them.

Third, the IAC seeks to build communication with Afro-descendant advocacy and research groups in Latin America to increase their visibility within the policy community and expand their access to policy officials and international development agencies. The IAC can help these groups access opportunities to get their ideas and proposals into policy debates and onto the agenda of development institutions.

IAC 2002 Annual Meeting

The IAC held its third annual conference on June 19 and 20 at the Washington headquarters of the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO). The conference was an opportunity to both review the direction and objectives of the IAC, as well as to focus on substantive issues related to race in Latin America. Specifically, participants examined the implications of

race for education and health policy in Latin America and explored the advances that could be made toward racial equality by utilizing traditional human rights mechanisms. David Brandling-Bennett, Deputy Director of the Pan-American Health Organization; K. Burke Dillon, Executive Vice President of the Inter-American Development Bank; and David de Ferranti, Latin American Vice President of the World Bank inaugurated the meeting. They offered a short overview of their institutions' programs related to Afro-Latins and expressed their support for these initiatives and the work of the IAC.

The presentations on education focused on issues ranging from the relationship among levels of education, racial identification, and racism in the Caribbean to ways in which data disaggregated for race could be used to design affirmative action programs. Several initiatives on race and education were examined, including those implemented by both local organizations and the multilateral development banks.

Addressing health, participants considered the obstacles to providing health services to marginalized Afro-descendant populations by examining the experiences of the autonomous region of Nicaragua and the Pacific Coast of Colombia. Improving data collection and designing the health system to reflect the multi-cultural characteristics of a given society were among the challenges highlighted. Participants noted some best practices and examined programs that implement them within Afro-descendant communities throughout Latin America. Finally, the prevalence of HIV among Afro-Latin Americans, especially those in Central America, was a central topic of discussion.

Another panel organized by the OAS Commission on Human Rights addressed the discrimination and injustice that confront Afro-descendants. The representative of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Robert Husbands, pledged his dedication to racial equality and assured participants that the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa marked

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Millennium Development Goals

Participants at the IAC 2002 Annual Conference agreed that the Millennium Development Goals could be used to measure the progress of development reaching Afro-Latin Americans and to encourage states and development agencies to incorporate this frequently marginalized group into development plans.

Laid out by the states of the United Nations at the September 2000 Millennium Summit, the Millennium Goals are:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development



PAHO

Director

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merely the beginning of the work to be done on the rights of Afro-descendant populations.

George Alleyne, director of PAHO, spoke over lunch about the need to design health systems that reach all sectors of society, including the often-overlooked Afro-descendant populations. He urged against what he referred to as the “tyranny of the averages” when analyzing health indicators, and advocated increased attention to the distribution of these figures, especially in relation to specific under-served groups.

Finally, it was suggested that the Millennium Development Goals be used as benchmarks to measure the progress of development within Afro-descendant communities. This idea, well received by participants, would entail urging governments, development agencies, and civil society organizations to assure that Afro-Latin Americans keep pace of progress as the developing world strives to achieve the goals laid out in the UN Millennium Declaration. Participants also urged multilateral institutions to incorporate racial diversity targets into their own institutional strategies.

Racial Impact Statement

The Ford Foundation used the IAC 2002 Annual conference to present its innovative requirement that grant applicants create “racial impact statements” outlining how proposed projects would affect excluded and marginalized groups. Participants responded very positively to the new grant criterion and even suggested that the multilateral development banks consider implementing a similar policy. Below we present an excerpt from the presentation:

“In order to assess the impact of social development on Afro-Latin populations, the notion of a “Racial Impact Statement” (RIS) may be a powerful device. Required as a prerequisite for certain categories of loan or grant requests, the RIS would be one tool for ensuring that marginalized communities participate fully and equally in the benefits and burdens of donor-funded development projects.

Briefly stated, the RIS would require applicants (be they government or civil society organizations) to collect and provide solid data and a narrative explanation of the ways in which a given funded project would positively and negatively affect different racial groups. For example, would a dam project disproportionately displace Afro-Latin and/or Indigenous populations relative to their representation in the country at issue? Would an educational project reach and benefit black and Indigenous children to the same extent as other children—or, if particular groups of children are in need of *greater* attention, would the proposed project specifically benefit them? When completed by applicants for funding, the RIS would answer these types of questions in the context of the particular country, project, and community.

As contemplated here, the *results or content* of the statement would not be an automatic determinant of funding. Rather, the RIS would provide critical feedback to guide donors in ensuring that funding promotes equality and universal development and, of course, does no harm. The RIS itself, however, would be mandatory for certain types of applications. (...)

African Roots, American Cultures

On December 12, 2001 the IAC sponsored a book launching at the World Bank for anthropologist Sheila Walker's *African Roots, American Cultures: Africa in the Creation of the Americas*. Mamphela Ramphele of the World Bank welcomed Walker and six Afro-Latin American NGO leaders who had contributed to the book. Congressman John Conyers (D-Mich) and other members of the Washington policy community explored the critical role that Africans and their descendants have played in the building of the "New World."

Earlier that day, the IAC organized a discussion among Afro-descendants from various Latin American countries to share their experiences promoting racial equity. Along with Sheila Walker, this roundtable included Romero Rodríguez of Uruguay, Lucía Dominga Molina of Argentina, Jorge Ramírez Reyna of Peru, and Gilberto Leal of Brazil. Discussion focused on how the human rights community could place racial discrimination more prominently on its agenda and work more effectively with Afro-Latin American advocacy groups in the region. The inclusion of Afro-descendant participants from Peru, Argentina,

An RIS would require donors and applicants to adapt their approaches and to employ some flexibility and innovation. For example, as the World Bank documented in its November 2000 workshop, "Todos Contamos,"¹ inclusion of racial and ethnic information in national census design and implementation is important, yet spotty at best in Latin America.

(...) The RIS described above should not stand alone. For those nations that have such data, donors could also require applicants to include as part of their submissions or country reports a more general profile of the demographics of poverty and marginalization in terms of race and gender. Recognizing that race, gender and poverty are intertwined throughout the Americas, a full and sophisticated national profile would inform donors' mission to alleviate poverty and promote development.

Nor would implementation of an RIS be a *substitute* for efforts targeted specifically at Afro-Latin and Indigenous populations. Rather, it would represent an additional tool for evaluating donors' past, current, and future efforts. Along those lines, the information described above would allow donors to review the extent to which their funding strategies serve the diverse populations of the region and reach the most vulnerable and impoverished communities.

To be sure, an RIS requirement should not be blindly or universally applied to all of a donor's programming or donor's activities. Rather, care would be required to determine substantive, geographic, and demographic categories of activities for which an RIS would be most appropriate. A series of well-planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated target projects seems a good starting strategy."

Alan Jenkins, Director
Human Rights and International Cooperation
The Ford Foundation

¹*Data Collection and Analysis: The "TODOS CONTAMOS" Workshop*. Report by Jeanette Sutherland. World Bank, Department of Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Latin America and Caribbean Region

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and Uruguay highlighted the problem of invisibility that Afro-descendants commonly confront in these countries.

Afro-Descendant Legislators

The IAC hosted the visit to Washington and New York, from June 26 to 28, of two Afro-Latin American legislators—Epsy Campbell of Costa Rica and Luiz Alberto Silva dos Santos of Brazil. The visit provided the legislators an opportunity to raise awareness among U.S. policy makers, human rights organizations, multilateral development banks, and U.S. black organizations of the challenges that confront Afro-descendants in Latin America. Campbell and Silva dos Santos were special guests of Reps. Charles Rangel (D-NY) and William Jefferson (D-LA) at a Congressional Black Caucus luncheon. Discussion emphasized the particular difficulties confronting black policy makers and the potential for greater communication and interaction among the black legislators of the hemisphere. Campbell

and Silva dos Santos also met with representatives of Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the International Human Rights Law Group at a meeting organized by the OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. In addition, the legislators met with black leaders at the National Urban League, Hispanic leaders at the National Council of La Raza, officials at the Inter-American Development Bank, and representatives of the State Department’s Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Finally, the Inter-American Dialogue and the Global Afro-Latin and Caribbean Initiative at Hunter College in New York City co-sponsored discussion groups in New York for the two legislators. Throughout their visit, Campbell and Silva dos Santos both insisted that ending racial inequalities must form an integral part of social policies in Latin America. They urged governments and development organizations to consult with Afro-descendant leaders when formulating policies that affect their communities.

“The contributions of Africans and their descendants to Pan-American life are so central and foundational that there is no way of discussing the Americas accurately and honestly without considering them. They were part of the agriculture that allowed the voluntary European and involuntary African immigrants to survive. They were part of the technology that allowed everyone to work and create. They were part of the economy that allowed the societies to develop and expand. They were part of the creation of the languages in which everyone learned to communicate. They were part of the definition of the nature of the spiritual, and of how to access and relate to it. They were part of the creation of all the myriad cultural systems, forms, and styles in which all African and European immigrant Americans organized themselves and expressed their identities.”

Sheila Walker,
African Roots, American Cultures: Africa in the Creation of the Americas
(Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001)



INTER-AMERICAN DIALOGUE

The Inter-American Dialogue is the premier center for policy analysis and exchange on Western Hemisphere affairs. The Dialogue's select membership of 100 distinguished private citizens from throughout the Americas includes political, business, academic, media, and other nongovernmental leaders. Nine Dialogue members served as presidents of their countries and more than a dozen have served at the cabinet level.

The Dialogue works to improve the quality of debate and decisionmaking on hemispheric problems, advance opportunities for regional economic and political cooperation, and bring fresh, practical proposals for action to governments, international institutions, and nongovernmental organizations. Since 1982—through successive Republican and Democratic administrations and many changes of leadership in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada—the Dialogue has helped shape the agenda of issues and choices on inter-American relations.

1211 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 510
Washington, DC 20036

Phone: 202-822-9002 **Fax:** 202-822-9553
Web Site: www.thedialogue.org