Societal Integration in the Americas

The different economic integration programs within Continental America have stirred justified concern among those intellectuals, social movements and political actors concerned with social justice, human rights and strengthening of democracy in the Americas. It is argued that at the proposed pace, economic integration will provoke vigorous transformations in the daily life of the continent's residents, without giving them concrete possibilities to participate in the decision making processes involved.

Because of its geographic scope, the plan to create FTAA is a principal target of concern. It is argued that if implemented in the way now being discussed, the free trade zone will broaden U.S. hegemony over the region, sharpening the existing social disparity (Barbosa 2000, Mello 2000). Many fear that the forum to be established for the participation of actors from civil society in the realm of the accords that compose the FTAA, mainly the Government Committee on Civil Society, will be insufficient to guarantee the effective inclusion of these actors in the more decisive negotiations (Sandoval Pena 2000) and that the trend towards bureaucratization is overcoming effective participation (Devlin & Garay Salamanca 1999: 36 f).

Based on the understanding, however, that the concretization of FTAA is irreversible and inevitable, alternatives have been sought to minimize the debilitating effects of its consolidation, so that economic integration is accompanied in some way by the strengthening of societal ties and political obligations between the different population groups of the region. Efforts in this direction are directed basically at the inclusion of environmental and social clauses – respect for human rights, reduction of social inequality, environmental protection, etc. - in commercial accords, as well as the establishment of a vast alliance between non-governmental actors from various parts of the continent (HSA 1999).

This paper seeks to discuss the limits imposed on social and political integration in the Americas, considering two hypothetical models, including:

i) the constitution of a public sphere and of a political community on a continental scale. This involves discussion - based on the proposal made by German social philosopher Jürgen Habermas for the European situation - of the chances of making continental integration an extension of the process of formation of nation states in the region.

ii) the formation of transnational networks of social actors, utilizing anti-racist cooperation between Brazilian and U.S. intellectuals and organizations as a case study.

I – The formation of a public sphere and of a political community in the Americas

The role and function of the public sphere in contemporary democracies already have been adequately investigated and are now well known. Those who study the theme, in which the multiplicity of theoretical matrixes that guide the research is weighty, are in accord in affirming that unlike despotic forms of government which are sustained by the use of brute force, democracy represents domination by consent, in which decisions need to be permanently well-grounded and justified, and always depend on the approval of the political community in order to be implemented. In this process, the public sphere has a central role: it becomes the arena where both the amalgam of the collective will takes place as well as the justification of the previously agreed to political decisions. Thus, the public sphere becomes the sounding board for social demands and the intermediary orbit which connects political decision-making centers and society as a whole. Along with free elections and the institutional framework of the democratic State, the existence of an influential and porous public sphere thus becomes a necessary condition to confer openness to the decision-making processes and dynamism to civic life   (Costa 1997, Costa 1999).

The transformations in the public sphere over history are also well documented in the literature. The rise of the public sphere, in its modern sense, is inseparable from the process of constitution of Nation-States and from the formation of national communities as integrated publics in which, the same language is generally spoken – there is obviously an exception for multi-lingual nations – and which shares, to some degree, a common daily life or life world and a collectively built political culture (Habermas 1990, orig. 1961). Therefore, corresponding to the institutional construction of the Nation-State on the cultural plane is the formation of national public spheres, at the interior of which are produced and reproduced the identity signs that define the nation. This process of symbolic construction of the nation takes place, according to Bhabha (1990:287) based on the tension between a pedagogical action and another action that is performative. The pedagogical action takes the national community as an object of the discourse that emphasizes the common origin and the supposedly primordial links that unite the different members of the nation. Through the performative action, the national symbols are up-dated and reinterpreted, causing the members of the nation to become subjects of living and permanent reposition of what is believed to be the common destiny of the national community. This dual discursive operation confers reality to the imagined national community, simultaneously establishing its being and its derivation, the essence which links it to a people, a culture and a territory and movement - transformation. In this context, the public sphere constitutes the living and dynamic arena in which the permanent process of discursive and symbolic construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of the nation takes place.

The formation of the modern public spheres historically takes place, however, concomitantly with the constitution of National States and the definition of the nation as an autonomous political community which sovereignly defines its destinies. It is also in the

national realm that the bases of modern citizenship are found, conceived as the set of rights and responsibilities fitting of those who make up the nation.

In recent decades, the vast cultural pluralization at the interior of contemporary democracies and the rise of an enormous variety of new social actors (NGOs) environmental and feminist movements, etc.) has caused some authors to question the congenital link between nations and the public sphere. Thus Fraser (1993), for example, questions the hypothesis of the existence of a single public sphere within the nation. For this author, the multiplicity of problems, themes and contexts in which are found the „critical forms" of communication, will force recognition of the existence of various publics and „counter publics". The existence of various publics or various public spheres allowes, according to Fraser, a better understanding of the opposition between the dominant public space, controlled by „masculinist ideology" and the socially diffuse and segmented contexts of production of a counter-culture of resistance.

Even if the process of the rise of a multiplicity of communicative spaces within contemporary democracies is evident, the idea that at the interior of the nation there is no convergence of the different publics and counter publics towards a common arena, the national public sphere, as Fraser defends, appears to be equivocal. In mature democracies, the public sphere is present as an open and dynamic communicative forum, in which new issues are permanently introduced for debate. There is no apriori distinction of the frontiers of the public and the private which define from the start the terms that may be dealt with by the public. The public sphere is thus found to be a porous and ubiquitous orbit that permeates all levels of society and incorporates the set of discourses, world visions and interpretations that acquire visibility and public expression. It is in the public sphere that the different groups constitutive of heterogeneous societies share arguments, formulate consensus and build common problems and solutions. The public sphere conforms, therefore, the public communicative context, in which the members of a plural national community constitute the

conditions for the possibility of co-existence and of mutual tolerance, as well as negotiate accords concerning rules that should govern common life (see Habermas 1996, esp. 156 pp.). In any case, it can be noted that within the boundaries of the Nation-State, the different communicative flows, whether they are legitimizers of the status quo, or they are impulses aimed at the transformation of the ruling order, converge on the national public sphere, disseminating, from there, to the whole of society. Thus there is not a multiplicity of public spheres within national contemporary democracies, as Fraser maintains. What exists is a variety of forums and communicative arenas which, to the degree in which they demand some political meaning, converge on the national public sphere that is shared and accessible to the whole set of citizens[i].

The democratic and democratizing role assumed by the public sphere within national boundaries in contemporary politics has led some authors to postulate that only the constitution of a world public sphere can build the bases of a democratic governability in the globalized world (Veira 2001). In the realm of the processes of formation of regional blocks, whether in Europe, or in the Americas, the possibility for formation of a transnational public sphere as a democratic response to economic integration has equally occupied an important place in the discussions.

For the European case, the best known representative of the second generation of the Frankfurt School, Jürgen Habermas, formulated the terms in which the constitution of a European public sphere could take place, outlining a project of political integration which, as can be seen, still has not been developed in the Americas to the same level of detail. We will thus make a brief digression to discuss Habermas' proposal concerning the European case, to then discuss the viability of such a project for the Americas.

According to Habermas (1998), the principal political challenge raised by globalization concerns the difficulties of realizing that which he defines as popular sovereignty, which would be the possibility for a political community to be able to determine

autonomously the rules that should govern its common life. More than normative desideratum, the concretization of popular sovereignty is presented by Habermas as historic experience, conducted in the realm of the European Nation-State in the post-war period. In this context, the constitution of a democratic state of law and the clear definition, under the label of the nation, of the sovereign political subject, has favored the rise of solidary and democratic social communities.

The process of globalization, however, according to Habermas, has obliterated the bases of support for the European democratic state. On one hand, transnational social processes have intensified (the globalization of the economy, the rise of global environmental risks, etc.) which prevent national governments from being able to guarantee, on their own, the implementation of the goals established by the national political communities. On the other hand, the acceleration of migratory movements and the construction of new cultural differences as a response to the homogenizing pressure of a world material culture have enormously broadened the range of existing life forms, causing to disappear the cultural traces common to the members of the nation, the foundation of civic solidarity. In this sense, new forms of social integration would be required that, by accompanying the intensification of economic integration found today at the heart of globalization, re-establish the pre-existing ties of solidarity and social cohesion. If, historically, it is observed that „at each new modernizing impulse intersubjectively shared life worlds open, to [later] be reorganized and close once again" (Habermas 1998:126), it is necessary to find new forms of social accommodation that are compatible with the vertiginous broadening of personal and social horizons caused by globalization. In the same way that the national identity is superimposed, over history, to religious or local loyalties, offering a platform to social integration in harmony with the modern post-traditional and secularized context, new possibilities for reconstitution of the ties of integration and social solidarity will be necessary that go beyond national borders, and correspond to the existing transnational economic dynamic.

It is therefore important to define what will be the source that generates social integration around which will take place the reaccommodation of the modernizing impulses of globalization. In the case of Europe, Habermas (1999) sees in the historical experience of the nation-State itself and in the formation of national public spheres, the model for the construction of new forms of social integration, on a continental scope.

Habermas' expectation, however, is that the nation forming process extends to the limits of Europe and has come to establish something like a continental public sphere founded upon the ties of belonging of all of the citizens to a collective European identity[ii]. This public sphere would be supported both by the preparation of the citizens for multilingualism, as well as by the action of non-governmental organizations and social movements, with the efforts made guided by a common political project which organically articulates the impulses for social integration originating in the various regions of Europe.

Even in the European sphere, Habermas' proposal to constitute a public continental sphere has confronted severe criticisms. Many authors have shown that there is no empiric plausibility in the proposal: there are no palpable indications that a European public sphere is in formation (Eder 2000). It is also argued that the diversity of the origins of the inhabitants of contemporary Europe impede recourse to a common history as a source for the constitution of an effectively broad cultural identity. Even if it came to constitute something like a common identity, this would imply the permanent establishment of symbolic frontiers to a European membership and the processes of exclusion which stem from this (see Costa 2001a).

The conditions for political integration in the realm of the Americas are certainly distinct from those found in Europe. The degree of vulnerability of democracy and the levels of poverty found in most of the 34 countries that have been negotiating the formation of FTAA do not find parallels in the member countries of the European Union. The differences in the processes of implementation of the two integration projects are equally evident. While in Europe it concerns an advanced process of unification of political institutions, of

equalization of the regional disparities and of the introduction of a common currency, in the case of the FTAA it concerns the creation of a commercial zone with the minimal regulatory compatibility required for free trade to be effectively possible. Nevertheless, the growth of the actors of civil society in the region and the ineludible „democratic deficit" (Serbin 1997:18) found in the processes of formation of the continental block, reveal the chance and the need for social and political integration in the Americas. If the dream of an alliance of the American countries goes back to the very origins of the constitution of the nation States in the region, it is now time to evaluate the possibilities for the emergence of a Pan-Americanism[iii] from below, understood as the emergence of a democratic and self-governed political community of continental breadth in the Americas. It is in this sense that we will now explore the restrictions imposed on the extension of the constitutional model in the national political communities in the Americas to the design of an American political space.

In the first place, it must be recognized that the constitution of the states and of the national identities in the American continent, in the context of the post-colonial disputes, conforms in all of the countries, to the bloody history marked by the oppression of population groups that are political or demographic minorities, such as Native Americans, blacks, women and immigrants. The historic glories upon which are built the national myths and identities refer in general to the violent episodes of destruction or submission of these groups. Even if there are non-deniable differences between the different processes of nation building in the Americas, it is well known that national identities are formed, first through the tension between the struggle against the European colonizer and the election of the „other" of the identity relationship within the nation itself (see the analysis of Senkman 1997 about the Argentine and Brazilian cases). That is, blacks or Native Americans were initially treated as groups that, given a supposed biologically explained inferiority, constitute impediments to the emergence of progressive nations in the Americas. It is in opposition to them that most national identities on the continent are formed. During the twentieth century, with the decline

of the racist-biological arguments, these groups came to be symbolically integrated to the national communities, in the form of an ideological elegy of the mestizo nations. This integration took place, however, in an unequal and hierarchical way, so that these groups continue to have a subaltern position within the nation, a fact reflected in daily discrimination and in the unequal access to public goods and social opportunities.

A cultural and political process of the deconstruction of the national identities existing in various countries of the Americas is taking place. It seeks to redefine the symbolic place conferred to the historically oppressed group within the nation[iv]. Thus, it does not seem possible that the experience of the constitution of nations and of the national public spheres in the Americas can extract the symbolic content that would establish a foundation for the process of formation of a continental political community.

Second, it is noted that the process of construction of the symbolic belonging and of the mechanisms of formation of the national identities in the American continent, even if successful in the sense of constituting solid „imagined communities" (Anderson 1991), do not find a correspondence in effective forms of solidarity between the different members of the nation. That is, even if the American nations would be, with few exceptions, based on a strong and well consolidated symbolic connection of all of the members to the national communities, this belonging, unlike that found in most countries of the European Union, very rarely generates the formation of institutional structures, in the form of a Welfare State, that assure redistributive solidarity within each nation. This leads us to the finding that: i) one cannot extend to the American continent the thesis postulated by Habermas that the construction of links of national belonging would create the conditions to allow the existence of solidarity among strangers ii) if something like a continental political community comes to be formed in the Americas, this, to judge by the experiences of nation building on the continent, would not necessarily produce forms of distributive solidarity between the whole set of citizens of the Americas.

The third obstacle to the formation of a political community and the related formation of a continental public sphere in the Americas is of a strictly political nature and concerns the symmetry of power between the various American countries. The absolutely disproportional weight of the cultural industry in the United States on the continent, and the degree of political and economic dependence of the other countries, is inevitably reproduced in the configuration of a continental public sphere, causing the existing multiplicity of political cultures to be annihilated by U.S. hegemony. In this context, the cultural life forms and the political experiences accumulated in the different parts of the continent would invariably be treated as incomplete and unsuccessful variations of U.S. society, which is seen mythically, above all in the poorest nations, as a Mecca of development and a perfect example of modernization.[v]

The above restrictions indicate that considering the set of developments required for its realization, the project of formation of a political community and public continental sphere in the Americas is barely plausible, when not considered as a simple political slogan – in which case the proposal continues to be attractive and an important factor in social mobilization. If the dominant standard of nation building on the continent is followed, the constitution of a continental political community and of a public sphere in the Americas will not generate transnational forms of social solidarity and will not be supported in cultural elements that are representative of the multiplicity of life forms existing on the continent.

The following section presents a second model for continental social and political integration, which would involve the formation of transnational networks of social actors.

II- Social networking in the Americas

In various ways, researchers and social activists in the Americas have been making references to a second mode of social integration that goes beyond national borders on the continent. This concerns the various contexts in which social actors, independently of their national origins, communicate and exchange diverse experiences. The transnational networks

of social movements have been the subject of special study. Various groups have mobilized around these networks to promote issues such as gender equality, environmental protection or respect for human rights on the continent. Unlike plans to create a continental public sphere, these networks involve the formation of multiple thematic arenas which do not converge on the establishment of a single public that encompasses all of the continent. This integration process appears to find itself effectively underway in the Americas.

Discussed transnationally by a restricted group of activists, and through the structures of the national public spheres, the issues handled in these transnational communicative contexts have repercussions, and in each country present their own national logic. That is, even when certain issues are discussed simultaneously in different countries and certain arguments circulate throughout the continent, the constitution of a single continental public sphere is not found. The developments observed until now point to the fact that in the Americas there is no formation of anything that recalls a unified public sphere, similar to the way the national public spheres were constituted. When, by chance, for example at a regional summit conference, certain themes are placed simultaneously on the agenda of the national public spheres, what is found is not a communicative exchange between the populations of the different regions of the continent. There is, in these cases, an exchange of information and experiences between a limited group of political activists who later circulate in their respective national public spheres the themes they discussed with their colleagues from other countries. The form, however, in which these themes are discussed internally in each country follows its own dynamic, defined by national factors, such as the level of organization of the social actors responsible for promoting the issue, the degree of international integration of the national media, the interest of the national government in incorporating the theme in issue to its program, and others.

Once again we can use the example of the European Union, and in particular Klaus Eder's study (2000) about the transformations of national public spaces in the realm of the

advance of continental integration. According to this study, in recent years in European geographic space, one finds the consolidation of various communicative spaces beyond national frontiers, which are not supported in shared life worlds or in the abstract sense of belonging to a European people. According to Eder, even if the working class and rural producers remain a national phenomenon, the European middle classes have been transnationalized: there already exists, according to Eder, a transnational culture of social movements, business men and women and of youth, which communicates with each other for instance through music or the learning of languages on the Internet. The daily life of tourists and of the scientific community show the rise of spaces of sociability and of post-national communication. For Eder, the crystallization of such communicative contexts basically reveals that: i) the legitimacy of transnational political institutions in the European case „can be filled in with concrete expectations on the part of society" (p. 174), ii) it is erroneous to think that an influential public sphere cannot built without a public linked by the belief in some common intrinsic trace, previous to the communicative situation.

According to Eder, the vision of a communicative community as that of a people which speaks the same language represents only a particular case of theory but not a „systemic requisite". That is, even while a national collective endowed with a cultural identity still presents itself as especially well stocked with social capital for communication, it represents <u>only one</u> of the multiple communicative webs that can be formed. Transnational communication assumes various forms and takes place in various contexts: „in the place of the national language appear polysemous metaphorizations with a common element, new metanarratives processed through concepts such as 'citizenship', 'community of values' or 'information society' " (p.178).

Even if this thesis requires support from future empiric research, what is postulated here is that judging by the existing evidence, the process of social integration in the Americas goes beyond national frontiers. This follows, if with less intensity, the dynamic observed by

Eder in the European case. The existence of communicative encounters and even systematic and long-lasting exchange networks between social groups which inhabit different parts of the continent can effectively be found in the daily life of immigrants, tourists, businessmen and women, followers of certain aesthetic-cultural trends, scientific communities and social movements. These diverse communicative contexts – which, it is said, do not imply a personal meeting between actors, can involve in this case virtual networks – do not converge towards a supra-national public sphere. In their decentralized dynamic, however, they increasingly promote social integration on the continent beyond national borders. The morphology and the nature of the social relations in each of these transnational communicative contexts is variable and needs to be investigated in each case. The aggregate social and political impact of the existing set of communicative contexts is still something unknown and undefined. In order to discuss the potential and restrictions of this decentralized form of social integration on the continent, a cooperation network which already has a few years of history is examined below. It concerns a network of U.S. and Brazilian organizations and intellectuals involved in the investigation of and struggle against forms of racist discrimination of Brazilians of African descent.

Bilateral Antiracism in the Americas: Brazilian-U.S. Cooperation

The interest of people in the United States in relations between the various socio-cultural groups which compose the Brazilian population is not recent. They recognize that in the country which has the highest population of African descendents outside of Africa, institutional or legal mechanisms for separation of the different demographic groups have not been established, and that since the first decades of the twentieth century Brazil serves as a model that is antithetical to the way in which co-existence between blacks and whites has historically taken place in the United States. After visiting Latin America in 1913 and 1914, Theodore Roosevelt, wrote a series of articles about „Brazil and the Negro", highlighting this recognition. African-American activists also commented, in the first decades of the twentieth

century, about the contrasts between the form of integration of the African descendents in Brazil and in the United States, praising the miscegenation and the cordial treatment offered to the various population groups in the South American country. A report published by the Associated Negro Press in 1920 summarizes the dominant perception among African-Americans until the 1940s:

„Brazilians, without regard to race or color, are as one big family, standing together on grounds of absolute equality of opportunity. There are no distinctions whatever, other than those imposed by wealth, culture and position...“ (apud Hellwig 1992: 40 f)

As Hellwig's valuable compilation (1992) reveals, the favorable vision of race relations in Brazil nourished by African-Americans would change during the Twentieth Century. It was gradually identified that behind the apparently egalitarian treatment of African descendents in Brazil, a system perpetuates that structurally disfavors blacks who, decades after the abolition of slavery, continue to occupy less qualified jobs and to receive lower salaries. That is, African Americans discovered that the Brazilian „racial democracy“ is not a model to be followed, but a situation where a fine layer of ideological cordiality covers the hard reality of oppression of African descendents. Beginning in the 1960s, at the height of the conquests of the Civil Rights Movement and of the search for recognition and affirmation for African American cultural expression, Brazilian race relations, to the degree that they were steered towards the complete cultural absorption of African descendents within the the nation, came to be strongly rejected and condemned by African American activists.

Beginning in the 1970s, the interest of anti-racist activists turned in a completely opposite direction of that found at the beginning of the century. Since then, it is no longer Brazil that is seen as a standard to be followed. To the contrary, the struggle and undeniable anti-racist conquests of African Americans' were identified as forms of action and collective affirmation capable of reversing the discrimination of African descendents in Brazil. Thus, in the cultural plane, the rise of the black „soul movement“ in the United States, along with other

events such as the victories of the national liberation movements in Africa, led, from the first half of the 1970s, to a search for the affirmation of African cultural origins by African descendents in Brazil. In addition to various centers of research and study of the Afro-Brazilian cultural legacy, in Salvador, Bahia the „Bloco Afro Ilê Aiyê" was founded, and became a milestone in the process of appreciation and affirmation of the African heritage in opposition to the syncretic national culture. In 1978, the Movimento Negro Unificado against Discrimanção Racial (MNU) was organized in various cities, and became the largest black movement with national representation since the Frente Negra Brasileira disbanded in the 1930s[vi] (Barcelos 1999: 160 ff).

The variations in research approaches to racial relations in Brazil conducted by Brazilian and U.S. researchers broadly correspond to the inflections found in the relations between U.S. and Brazilian anti-racist activists. Thus, the interpretation of racial relations in Brazil in the 1930s and 1940s is marked by the great influence of the works of Gilberto Freyre who, reconsidering racism of a biological nature, dominant until that time, emphasized the importance of the contribution of African descendents in the construction of a Brazilian mestizo, fruit of the fusion of blacks, whites and indigenous peoples. Donald Pierson's research in Bahia in the 1940s marks the introduction of the Chicago School-inspired methodology of local studies to the analysis of Brazilian racial relations. Pierson concluded, as Guimarães (1999: 76) has summarized, that „Brazil was very successful in dismounting the racial castes of slavery and in establishing a multiracial society of classes". Years later, studies conducted through cooperation between the Federal University at Bahia and Columbia University in New York, Wagley (1952: 148 ff) reiterated Pierson's conclusions about the disappearance of racial castes, but observed that:

„With rare exceptions, the people of the upper class of Brazil are Caucasian in physical appearance (...) the criterion of race becomes most crucial in determining social position"

Within the realm of studies about racial relations in Brazil organized by UNESCO, Florestan Fernandes and his disciples inaugurated a new approach. This group argued that prejudice has structural causes which make it necessary to study how racism became aggravated by increased competition in the labor market between blacks and white immigrants and their descendents. At the end of the 1970s, influenced by transformations in the United States, researchers trained at U.S. universities promoted a new inflection in studies about Brazilian racial relations. Since then, a new paradigm of analysis was established in the sociological construction of the category of race, which as shown below, has guided most of the work on the theme until today.

Along with the exchange of experiences between activists and anti-racist organizations and scientific cooperation in the study of racism, the activities of U.S. philanthropic institutions, notably the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, constitute the third pillar of the bilateral alliance for the struggle against racism. The activity of the philanthropic entities in Latin America has many years of experience marked by important changes in the lines of cooperation. For many years, the Rockefeller Foundation concentrated on financing of agricultural activity, while Ford, since the 1950s, concentrated its efforts „on five priority areas including world peace, freedom and democracy, economic opportunity, educational opportunity, and the study of human behavior to enhance citizenship" (Meyer 1999: 25 f). In 1959, Ford opened a Latin American office in New York City and in 1961 a field office in Rio de Janeiro. The Ford Foundation has had a central role in financing research and study centers in Brazil since 1967, when many scientists were persecuted by the military government and lost their positions at Public Universities (Forjaz 1997). With redemocratization, the philanthropic foundations redirected their lines of financing, and since

the late 1970s have offered vital support to many Brazilian social movements and NGOs. The Ford Foundation „carefully" began its investments in combating racial discrimination in Brazil in 1979, since „the Brazilian [military] government at the time was known to consider research on race and the activities of black movements as subversive, and a threat to national security… . [At this time] the Ford Foundation is the largest funder of black movement organizations in Brazil by far and as the largest philanthropic funder of race relations research, mostly through its human rights program. Other US Foundations, including MacArthur, Rockefeller and Kellogg fund this area at a much lower level" (Telles 2001)

The racial paradigm and anti-racism in Brazil

A recent article by the renowned French social scientist Pierre Bourdieu, written in cooperation with anthropologist Loïc Wacquant (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1998), unleashed a vigorous debate about the contribution of U.S. activists, foundations and researchers in the struggle against racism in Brazil. According to these authors, the intervention of U.S. elements has led to a „diffusion of US racial doxa within the Brazilian academic field at the level of both representations and practice" and the imperialist transposition to Brazil of the black/white dichotomy that marks U.S. society, in frontal disconsideration of the fact that „in Brazil, racial identity is defined by reference to a *continuum* of color'."

Intellectuals involved in racial studies in Brazil with ties to the U.S. foundations, responded promptly to Bourdieu & Waquant's criticism, convincingly showing that a bi-national alliance exists between scientists and social movements to combat racial oppression in Brazil, and which cannot be characterized as imperialist (French 2000). Edward Telles (2001:2), who until recently directed the Ford Foundation human rights program in Rio de Janeiro, demonstrated that „the Ford Foundation has developed its program on race in Brazil interactively with the black movement and its (Brazilian) academic and activist allies. Today, that agenda is driven mostly by domestic human rights concerns within Brazil, which have come to the fore as a leading civil society concern since current democratization began in the

late 1970s". At the same time, there was an attempt to counter the analytical argument of Bourdieu & Wacquant, and to justify the use of the pair of categories black/white in the study of racial relations in Brazil. The response to Bourdieu & Waquant argued that while the apology for miscegenation and the notion of the continuum of color characterizes the dominant racial discourse in Brazil, in reality, the sharp black/white dichotomy defines an hierarchy of access to social opportunities (Guimarães 2001).

As a result, the studies about racial inequality which arose in the late 1970s and which have been regularly updated, authorize a certain analytical use of the black/white pairing in the Brazilian context (these studies include (Hasenbalg 1979, Hasenbalg & Silva 1988, Silva & Hasenbalg 1992, Hasenbalg 1995, Silva & Hasenbalg 1999, Silva 2000). The studies basically show that:

i) The social inequalities between the five demographic groups identified by official Brazilian statistics – black, white, mestizo, yellow and indigenous – can be grouped in only two categories: whites and non-whites. This means that, despite the many chromatic variations with which people present themselves, access to social opportunities obey a bipolar hierarchy;

ii) Even if the factors linked to class are statistically isolated (schooling, professional training, etc.), social inequalities remain which can only be explained when the black/white dichotomy is introduced as a classificatory order. This does not imply, however, the affirmation of the biological existence of race between humans, but of the reference to race as a social construction which functions as a mechanism of ascription and hierarchization.

iii) the disfavor of non-white groups cannot be understood as a simple reproduction of historic inequalities inherited from the slave past. The comparison between different generations of whites and non-whites allows demonstrating that non-whites have

racialized perception of themselves and of others" (

This identity construction influenced by the political imperative to combat structures that reproduce racial inequalities has been stimulated by both „African-Brazilian culture" as well as by the „cultural and political legacy of the 'Atlantic Negro' – that is, the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, the Caribbean cultural renaissance, the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, etc." (idem). Thus, based on the degree of knowledge and on the internalization of the white/black polarization, an evolutive scale is defined that allows speaking of distinct levels of „racial consciousness" (Hanchard 1994: cap. 4), and also suggesting programs of consciousness and public policies aimed at increasing racial consciousness.

The organizations and leaders of the Brazilian black movement, only partly identify with the set of strategies for combating racism designed by the racial studies. On one hand, the importance of identifying and combating racial inequalities is recognized. A large number of NGOs are currently acting in this field, and in general have support from U.S. foundations. These NGO's offer a variety of programs that offer legal assistance, cultural promotion and related activities.[vii] On the other hand, many leaders of the black movement reject the

construction of social identities based on the black/white dichotomy suggested by the racial studies, and defend the preservation of the current plurality of identity models. What the Brazilian activists seek to show is that even when they do not emphasize their racial identity, Brazilian African descendents are not legitimizing the dominant racist culture. They say the contrary is true, that they are seeking social recognition for that which they understand to be the authentic expression of themselves, as an important black activist in São Paulo affirmed:

„We propose that the studies of identity definitively consider this „rainbow" as a characteristic Brazilian form of operating in our society. It is not only a form of not-saying, of not-being, exactly to the contrary. Often, that which is our particularity affirms and reveals many things". (Félix 2000: 163)

The relationship between structural inequalities and social identities, as shown in another context (Costa 2001c), conforms to an extremely complex equation which cannot be properly analyzed within this paper. For the purposes of this text, it should be noted, however, that the construction of social identities involve personal and collective processes for searching for and conquest of social recognition, and thus compose a set of multiple and simultaneous choices and negotiations which are informed by myths, desires, experiences and knowledge. In this sense there is no Archimedian point outside of history and outside of social relations that allows judging social and collective experiences, or to characterize as false consciousness those identity constructions that are not organized by a basis of knowledge linked to a particular sociological reading of social relations in Brazil. By hierarchizing the effectively existing choices and standards, some racial studies wind up interpreting the substantive differences between self-identity of the Brazilian African descendents and the idealized image of the African American as „conscious of their race", as a temporary lapse which sees the predominant self-image among Brazilians of African descent as an early stage of „identity in opposition to African descent" (French 2000: 118).

It can thus be concluded that, in contrast to Bourdieu & Wacquant's affirmations, the alliance between U.S. and Brazilian researchers, foundations and anti-racist social organizations is not an expression of U.S. cultural imperialism, but an effective space of communication and exchange of experiences which have contributed to unveiling the unequal forms of treatment and the reigning racial ascriptions. Many advances achieved by anti-racist struggles in Brazil, such as compensatory public policies and the strong integration of combating racism on the Brazilian political agenda, were clearly favored by this alliance. Without transnational support, the advances and the legitimization conquered by the black movement in Brazil would be certainly less expressive.

Nevertheless, we cannot fail to recognize the tension between the standards of social recognition of African descendents formulated within the alliance, clearly inspired by the conquests of African Americans, and the predominant forms of social identity found among Brazilian African descendents. In this situation, the demands for recognition and the dominant cultural practices among Brazilian African descendents are treated, in references to African Americans who are „conscious of their race", as imperfect and incomplete self-representations. It should not be believed that the limits presented by the alliance reproduce the tensions between an abstract and universal value – the elimination of racism – and the cultural forms of concrete life. The anti-racist alliance serves to show that one cannot deny the existence of racism in Brazil, and has helped to construct the social consensus that this must be challenged. The question which is raised concerns the suitable and just form to conquer racism. This does not involve a relativization of universal rights in name of the preservation of certain cultural practices, but the affirmation that the respect for universal rights can only be guaranteed if the concrete forms of searching for recognition in a given socio-cultural context are observed.

The U.S. Brazil anti-racist alliance provides an important lesson about the formation of transnational networks aimed at the promotion of human rights, democracy or social justice

on the American continent. The heterogeneity of the cultural standards and of the levels of economic prosperity between the different countries of the Americas requires special precautions, to avoid that the horizontal cooperation beyond national borders leads to a promotion of standards of social emancipation that are dominant in the wealthiest countries of the continent. We can make a clear distinction here between political conquests and cultural life forms: the different social networking processes on the continent should allow the conquests obtained by women's or anti-racist movements in countries such as Canada or the United States to continue to have positive impacts on the combat of oppression of blacks, women and Native Americans on the rest of the continent. Any hierarchization of existing cultural life forms must be rejected to avoid causing the dominant intercultural, inter-ethnic or gender relations in those countries where the social movements find more advanced models to be followed throughout the continent. The existing cultural standards and identities are not untouchable museum pieces, they are continuously formed and transformed, reflecting, among other things, the transnational dynamic of social processes in the globalized world. Nevertheless, the social integration desired through networks of social actors - globalization from below - should not contribute to causing the models of social relations built in the leading regions of the modernization process to invariably function as a single reference which guides emancipatory projects in all of the regions.

Conclusions

The advances of economic integration projects on the American continent, and above all, the broadest of them, the FTAA, reveal not only the opportunity, but the need for reflection about models of social cohesion that respond to the systematic transnational integration. This paper sought to discuss the principal limits imposed on the two forms of strengthening of the social ties, beyond national boundaries, among the different demographic groups which inhabit the various regions of the Americas.

The first model is that which supposes the construction of something like a „continental nation" in the Americas. In this case, continental social integration would correspond to an expansion of the process of national formation, in such a manner that, the same way in which each country of the continent historically formed a nation with its own identity, an American political community is constituted that shares a public sphere and a common political culture. If in the realm of the independence struggles, geographic and symbolic frontiers are formed which define the nation states existing in the Americas, at present, values such as the full realization of human rights, sustainable development and equal opportunity should constitute the basis for the formation of the Pan American community. We sought to show that the systematic exclusion of minorities and the nonexistence of distributive solidarity among its members, represent the most characteristic traces of nearly all of the American nations. In this way, it does not seem advisable that the process of nation building on the continent be the model to inspire the integration of the Americas. At the same time, the strongly unequal distribution of political, economic and symbolic resources in the different regions of the continent allows predicting that the continental political community would reflect the existing imbalance of power, consolidating the hegemony of the North over the South of the continent.

The second integration model proposed is based on the processes already underway for the formation of transnational networks of social actors. A convergence of the different networks toward a continental public sphere was not identified. It is in the realm of the national public sphere that the themes handled in the transnational networks have impact and resonance. Utilizing the example of cooperative efforts between the U.S. and Brazil to combat racism in Brazil, it was shown that, in the realm of a transnational alliance, minimal parameters were established for the respect of human rights on the continent. At the same time, the alliance strengthened the relative power and impact of the black movement in the internal struggle between political forces in Brazil. Everything indicates a similar dynamic

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Endnotes

[i]) Political sense refers here to the practices, discourses and demands which have consequences for the entire national political community, thus requiring the positioning of social actors beyond the frontiers of a certain counter public. Thus, to the degree in which, for example, the struggle against domestic violence leads to a demand for a set of public policies and legal changes, this goes beyond the borders of the restrictive communicative circles which originally brought the problem to light, integrating it to the national public sphere.

[ii] One should not confuse the importance attributed by Habermas to the cultural identity with the attribution of an ethical-political substance to the nation. The author clearly shares Benedict Anderson's consecreted and generalized view in the political theory that nations are „imagined comunities", historically built (see Pensky 2000 about this issue). Implicitly, however, Habermas, appears to see in the common cultural identity the

demand that a certain political community be able to negotiate, communicatively, the procedural rules for the self-regulation of collective life.

[iii] The plans for continental unification were designed based on the independence struggles in the Americas. Among the different Panamericanist trends, generically, we can distinguish the Monroeists – in reference to the Monroe Doctrine – which sought the consolidation of a Pan American union under U.S. hegemony, and the Bolivian, in reference to Simon Bolivar – who sought the union of the other countries as an antidote to U.S. dominion. (see Antiásov 1986). In the view of Gonçalves (1999: 78), the proposal for the creation of the FTAA would promote, among the most optimistic economic currents „a heterodox marriage between 'Monroeists' and 'Bolivarianists',„ to the degree in which it points to advantages of the commercial accord for both the United States, as well as for the poorer countries in the continent. In the case of those who defend what was called here Panamericanism from below, this does not involve a lack of consideration for the disparities of economic and political power between the different countries of the region, but the search by the bases for democratic governance in the Americas.

[iv] The symbolic reconstruction of the American nations can be observed, even if in diverse ways in different countries of the region, since the recent decades of the Twentieth Century. In the United States, the civil rights movements exposed the racist essence of the nation, revealing how the U.S. national identity was formed through the systematic and explicit subordination of African-Americans (Marx 1998). In cases such as that of Mexico (Gabbert 1993), to Bolivia (Ströbele-Gregor 1993), Peru (Speck 1999) or Brazil (Costa 2001b), different social and cultural movements have shown how the mythification of the mestizo nation functions as a form of social exclusion, to the degree in which it serves to legitimize the inferior position of non-whites.

[v] The frequently referred to Latinization of the United States, reflected in the expansion of the Spanish language and in the Latin American influence in U.S. pop culture, does not substantially change the unequal terms in which the construction of the continental public sphere takes place. What has been assisted in the United States is the emergence of hybrid cultural forms which, although they allegorically recall the cultural traditions which arose from parts of the continent located south of the Rio Grande, cannot be treated simply as a mere transposition of Latin American cultural inheritance to within U.S. borders.

[vi] Unlike the Frente Negra Brasileira (Black Brazilian Front) which sought to affirm - as a challenge to the dominant biological racist ideology - the capacity of African descendents who acquired „modern values,„ and abilities, and thus contribute to the emergence of a progressive „civilization,„ in the tropics, the Movimento Negro Unificado (Unified Black Movement) sought to denounce the racist elements of Brazilian national formation (Hofbauer 1999).

[vii] A trend can be identified towards the formation of new networks for cooperation and exchange of information between the various fronts for anti-racist struggle as indicated by the case of the Brazilian Black Women's Network which is composed of 13 organizations. In recent months, the Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be held in Durban, South Africa, in August has functioned as a "catalyst for a lasting alliance" (Ford Foundation Report, Spring 2001).