

Political Representation and Participation in Brazil: The Case of the Black Movement.

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The Case of the Black Movement

By Leone Sousa

This paper discusses the impact of contemporary global trends such as the emergence of alternative forms of political organization and participation in Brazil. I refer, on the one hand, to the proliferation and growing influence of the so-called new social movements and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and, on the other hand, to the ever-increasing employment, by ordinary citizens, of newly-developed electronic media, both to constitute public spaces in which topics of common interests are debated, and to directly pressure legislators and governmental officials. More specifically, this text interprets the manifestation of such trends in Brazil in the context of the implementation of racial-based affirmative action policies for admission in public universities. An old-standing and crucial demand by the recently-invigorated Brazilian black movement, the quota system for blacks and *pardos* in federal and state universities, inaugurated in 2003, has generated not only an intense controversy among activists, the intelligentsia and governmental officials, but also sparked a vigorous reaction by society at large, which have systematically debated the issue through the new technological means of communication. This study, therefore, aims at contributing to a broader discussion on the role of these new forms of political representation and participation, vis-à-vis the current phenomenon generally known as the crises of representation in democratic regimes, as well as to point to the dilemmas these phenomena bring to further consolidation of democracy in Brazil.