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Haitian Migration and Structural Racism in Brazil

Jailson de Souza e Silva, Fernando Lannes Fernandes ,
and Jorge Luiz Barbosa 

Introduction

Since 2010, Brazil has received a regular and growing number of Haitian immigrants, a process which is still ongoing. There are many reasons for the arrival of this population. Brazil is seen as a reference country by Haitians since 2004 when Brazil commanded the UN mission to help stabilise the country.¹ Despite that, until 2010 the number of Haitian migrants in the Brazil was very small. The 2010 earthquake can be seen as the trigger behind the greater migration process observed in the 2010s (Silva, 2013). It is worth noting that the Brazilian government's openness to them, followed by easy legal registration of migrants, and an identification between the Haitian and Brazilian peoples are central factors encouraging Haitian migration to Brazil.

Once they arrive in Brazil, Haitian migrants face a set of challenges to achieve a dignified insertion into Brazilian society. The pattern of inequality

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in Brazilian society—for which racism is foundational—is a central element in understanding the difficulties experienced by Haitians, the vast majority of whom are Black. Understanding the impact of racism on the conditions under which Haitian migrants come into Brazil, then, is a relevant element to understanding our own patterns of inequality, how they are expressed and how we can face them.

It is a well-known fact that Brazilian society is one of the most unequal in the world (Lima & Prates, 2019; Pimentel, 2023). This inequality has been produced since the beginning of the colonisation process by Portugal, from the control of the various forms of economic, political, cultural, educational, military, technological and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1995) by a specific social group: white, enriched, heteronormative men (Alencastro, 2000; Ellsworth, 1999; Nascimento, 2006). Its reproduction process is supported, in turn, by three central elements: patriarchy/sexism; institutional patrimonialism² and structural/institutional racism. In this chapter, we focus on this third element and its role in the (re)production of inequality, and how it relates with Haitian migration in particular.³ Our aim is to provide a comprehensive reflection on the phenomenon of Haitian migration to Brazil and how the country's characteristic structural racism impacts the experiences of Haitians living in the country. The first part of this chapter contains an analysis of the socio-historical conditions delineating structural racism in Brazil and the racist structures that sustain inequality in contemporary Brazil. In the second part we present the perceptions of Haitian populations living in Rio de Janeiro on racism in Brazil and how they feel impacted by it, drawing on a vast collection of data from Haitian migrants gathered as part of the Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) Hub.⁴

The Historical Context of Racism in Brazil

The Portuguese invasion and occupation of the territory that became known as Brazil began in 1500, and agricultural colonisation began in 1554 with the institution of *hereditary captaincies* and *sesmarias*—the primary forms of division of the land between white men graced by royalty (De Carvalho, 2015). That is how patrimonialism and patriarchy became the origin of Brazil's unequal social structure. The economic structure was formed by landowners developing strategies based initially on the exploitation of indigenous labour and then, on a much larger scale, of slaved Black African labour. Through that process, a genocide took place against the original population, with the death of about 90% of the indigenous population, according to historians'

estimates, either through murder, intense exploitation or diseases brought by the colonisers (Garcia, 2017).

In the process of building the colony, first a sovereign Empire and then a Republic, a state dominated by male owners was established with two basic central functions: firstly, to appropriate the collective wealth and distribute it within the dominant social group and, secondly, to control the bodies and desires of subaltern populations namely women, Black and Indigenous peoples. This process continues today. The ideological/symbolic element that sustains the reproduction of Brazilian social, economic and cultural inequality is meritocracy.⁵ Naturalised meritocracy then is used in Brazil as primary justification and evidence that white people, especially men, should take up the main economic, political, cultural and educational positions in the social world. These men—and white women, to a lesser extent—are the vast majority of people in public universities, in the company's directive and management boards, in the most valued and prestigious government jobs, in the cultural field and in sports institutions' leaderships, even in activities where there is a higher percentage of Black men and women (Schucman & Melo, 2022).

Meritocracy becomes an ideology—in this case, an effect that is asserted as cause or explanation, creating an illusion about reality—when Brazilian society fails to recognise its unequal structure as the true basis for maintaining the dominant positions of white people, and not the other way around. This markedly ideological argument is meant to explain how Black people, who constitute the majority (about 55%) of Brazilian society, did/do not have the proportional space in universities, the judiciary, diplomatic institutions, business management and so on. For example, among the top 500 Brazilian companies, only 4% of executives are Black (Haje, 2017); the judiciary system is comprised of about 16% *pardos* (mixed Black African background) and Black people make up just under 2% (Valente, 2018). At the same time, almost 70% of the 820,000 people incarcerated in the country are Black.⁶

Migrant populations also suffer from the prevalence of a racist logic: white migration—especially from the United States and Europe—has historically been seen as positive and valued by dominant groups, since it fits into the logic of *whitening* local societies, whereas South American and African migration is viewed by dominant groups with contempt and distrust. In the case of Haitian migration, which constitutes the largest contingent of Black migrants in the country, the process is aggravated by racism and the stigmatisation of Haiti as a country dominated by misery, political instability and natural disasters (Balaji, 2011; Clerge, 2014; Pyles et al., 2017).

Race and Racism in Brazilian Society

Critically examining racism in Brazilian society requires overcoming the idea that it is something particular to interpersonal relationships or even a localised episode of prejudicial practices. Racism is a structuring structure—to employ the famed conceptualisation by Pierre Bourdieu (1995)—or, as we prefer to call it, a complex socio-political system that creates, reproduces and updates racialised relations of social inequality and bodily distinction of rights.

For Quijano (2010), race has become a basic criterion for classifying the world population, which establishes a humanness hierarchy in social, cultural and aesthetic corporeity. As such, racism can be recognised as a regime of power based on subordinating bodies, identities and practices, underlying the capitalist mode of (re)producing social relations, and thus implies a globalised order of peoples, nations and territories:

The new historical identities created from the idea of race were associated with the nature of roles and places in the new global structure of labour control. Both elements (race and division of labour) are structurally associated and mutually reinforcing, even though neither was necessarily dependent on the other to exist or to transform itself. (Quijano, 2010, 118)

Racism as a social regime of globalised power has established distinctive links between ways of life, social subjects and territories of existence. It is also responsible for the general and specific trajectories of the histories of societies that reproduce the very modern-colonial capitalist relations that sustain a civilisational hierarchy of being, knowing and living whose absolute centre is the Western European rationality.

Legacy of Colonialism on Racialised Relations

According to Grosfoguel (2010), racism as a power-complex system won the world over through mercantile colonisation, as geographical expansion arranged a set of combined unequal social relations: (i) a class hierarchy; (ii) an international centre/periphery division of labour; (iii) an interstate system of political-military organisations; (iv) a global ethno-racial hierarchy privileging Europeans over non-Europeans; (v) a sexual hierarchy that puts men above women and European patriarchy above other forms of man-woman relationships; (vi) a sexual hierarchy that disqualifies homosexuals in relation to heterosexuals; (vii) a spiritual hierarchy that places Christians above non-Christians; (viii) an epistemic hierarchy that places Western cosmology and

knowledge above non-Western ones; and (ix) a linguistic hierarchy that privileges European languages—as well as communication and knowledge and theories produced from them—considering that others produce folklore or a smaller culture.

This system of power might be defined as coloniality. It was inaugurated with the mercantile colonialism of the fifteenth century but exceeded it and persists to this day. Despite its modern features, its *anima* remains colonial, since racism takes on a form that subordinates social subjects in oppressive, discretionary and humiliating work relations, in the non-recognition of subjectivities and the denial of cultural practices, in disrespect for religious beliefs, in gender constraints and violence and in the limited possibilities of insertion in public and private institutions. This is why we fully agree with the following statement of Silvio Almeida when he says:

Racism is always structural, i.e., (...) an element that integrates the economic and political organization of a society. In short, what we seek to demonstrate is that racism is the normal manifestation of a society, not a pathological phenomenon or one expressing any kind of abnormality. Racism provides meaning, logic, and technology to the forms of inequality and violence that shape contemporary social life. (Almeida, 2018, 15–16)

We are in the face of a society construction paradigm whose main operator is racism, which we understand as a negative order of classification that, above all else, imposes a subordination condition on social subjects considered as inferior.

The fact that racism, when operating on more general scales of society, implies deep body markings, must be acknowledged. In addition to the markings of phenotypes (skin colour, hair type, nose shape), the conversation must include, as Kimberlé Crenshaw (2002) says, the intersectional relations of race and gender in the processes of reproducing social inequalities, as well as in recognising them as the cause of oppression, discrimination and lack of protection for Black women.

In Brazil, according to Munanga's (2004) teachings, racism is a social and historical construction that encompasses prejudice and discrimination by people who naturalise inequalities imposed on Black and Indigenous populations at different stages of the life cycle. Racism, therefore, is reinforced by common language, feeding on the hegemonic conditions of a culture of social privilege, and is sustained by it, while influencing everyday life and how institutions organise and interact with each other, as well as how social groups and classes are welcomed and treated.

Institutionalised Structural Racism in Brazil

In a society marked by mercantile slavery and governed by racism from its inception, as in the case of Brazil, the state takes on an instrumental role in the reproduction of racialised relations, especially in the institutionalisation of inequality and the non-recognition of rights, which perversely impact daily life. That leads to the notion that racism reveals itself as an important part of the debate around intertwining racial, cultural, sexual and gender hierarchies within the very functioning of Brazilian State institutions:

When the public power, by means of the political elite, seems to favour, or disfavour certain groups identified by their ethnicity, race, (...) it denies the legitimacy of many other segments existing and expressing themselves, leaving the doors open to prejudicial and discriminatory practices. In other words, it denies others (the different) the possibility to have access either to the legal arsenal of equality and equity, as a dominant ideological trait, or to recognition and political participation. (Bandeira & Suarez, 2002, 1)

Our historical sociability experience confirms the racialised organisation of social relations, whose implications are manifested in multiple dimensions, contexts and events involving social subjects in unequal conditions that reiterate the privileges of classes, groups and individuals to the detriment of justice and law as organising principles in relations between citizens. This is the scenario in which repertoires of representation and oppressive and conservative identity narratives materialise to prevent the coexistence of different people and to radicalise forms of exploitation and racial subordination. These are experiences of permanently reinventing unequal conditions of existence and reiterating invisible racialised positions:

Brazil constructs a particular notion of race according to which mixed-race and lighter-skinned people who display symbols of Europeaness – Christian formation and a mastery over language – can be considered white. By this rule, social acceptance and value become greater, the closer someone's skin pigmentation is to European-white. The attribution of colour to individuals, a common practice in Brazil which underlies the identification of colour groups by sociologists, far from dispensing with the notion of "race", presupposes a very peculiar racial ideology and racism. (Guimarães, 1999, 96)

Race is maintained as a symbol of subordination in the hierarchical division of labour, housing conditions and access to services (including public ones), and therefore continues to produce a perverse logic of maintaining members of racial groups subordinate to what the racial code of a society

defines as their appropriate place of being, as individuals and groups in societal settings.

Different spatial settings constitute experiences of relationships that form and conform the subjectivities of individuals and social groups, bringing to light debates about racism in their socio-spatial conditions, their inequality markers—from *favelas*⁷ to universities or from *quilombos*⁸ to large city squares—with profound implications on people's life trajectories. We can understand racism in the racialisation of individuals, communities and groups, as well as practices, experiences and territories.

According to a major global study conducted by IPEA (2007), Black newborns are underweight compared to white babies, as well as more likely to die before reaching the age of one, less likely to attend day-care, and suffer from higher failing rates in school, which leads them to drop out of school with lower educational levels than white children. As a result of low education, Black individuals are less able to find a formal, qualified job. And when they do find a job, they are paid less than half the salary received by their white counterparts, which leads to them retiring later and with lower pensions, if at all. Throughout their lives, they suffer the worst attention in the healthcare system and end up living less and in greater poverty than white people (IPEA, 2007, 281). It is worth including the lethal violence that takes the lives of thousands of young Black men each year (in the past ten years, there has been a variation between 50,000–60,000 homicides per year, 75% of which are Black men) in this cognitive map. The concept of Brazil as a racial democracy does not hold in the face of the daily life of Black populations.

Whitewashing as Strategy of Reproduction of Brazilian Structural Racism

As Andrews (1997) states, the Brazilian model of race relations works very efficiently to reduce racial tension and competition, while keeping Black people in a subordinate political, social and economic position. Systemic racism is therefore created to rationally structure the functioning of society and elaborate institutional models as their socio-political disciplinary management and territorial control support. The political and aesthetic instrumentalisation of the ideology of whitewashing was, so to speak, one of the first and most brutal devices of racism in Brazil, whose harmful and perverse effects are still evident in our society.

Whitewashing became a strategy to erase black presence in Brazilian society in favour of an alleged white Christian demography with the directed European migration policy during the last quarter of the nineteenth century (Santos, 2002). Eugenics soon became more effective and lasting, however, systematically erasing the creation of memories, celebration of religions, aesthetic experiences, work practices and sociability experiences, especially to deny Black territories and bodies in strategies of socio-spatial segregation.

(...) besides causing a sense of inferiority and self-rejection, the non-acceptance of one's ethnic fellow and the search for whitewashing lead light-skinned people to internalize a negative image of Black, which leads them to distance themselves from Black people, while most of the time looking at their situation of penury and physical and cultural extermination with indifference and insensitivity, often attributing to them the very causes of their situation. (Silva, 2007, 97)

Cida Bento (2002) argues that dominant groups consider themselves—or even create themselves—as reference for all humanity, and by doing so engage in the symbolic appropriation that elevates the white body to a condition of superiority in relation to others. This appropriation eventually legitimises their economic, political and cultural supremacy in society as a whole. Here, we are faced with yet another device of the visceral racism of Brazilian society: whiteness. The construction of whiteness is the political-ideological building of extremely negative imagery around black people, which undermines their racial identity, damages their self-esteem, blames them for the discrimination they suffer and, finally, justifies racial inequalities (Bento, 2002). Ruth Frankenberg states that whiteness is a place from which white subjects see others, and themselves, a position of power from which she attributes to the other what they do not attribute to themselves (Frankenberg, 1995).

But the subordination of Black men and women in Brazil has never been passively experienced. On the contrary, struggles for freedom forged a path of Black movements fighting for the right to education, health, work, housing and culture that greatly contributed to the achievements of our incomplete, fragile democracy. Since their enslavement, the Black population has devised modes of resistance and rebellion that have shaped social struggles and spaces to affirm their existence. From *quilombos* to *favelas* and peripheries, we battle against socio-spatial segregation. From culture and arts to African and Afro-Brazilian religions, we reinvent memories to update traditions of Black identities and belonging in the face of a distinctive order of rights. A fundamental political issue of Brazilian society hence emerges: the confrontation with racism as a possibility of overcoming social inequality and, above all,

class, race and gender power relations that (re)produce the non-recognition of individual and collective rights to full citizenship.

As noted above, whiteness plays an important role in structuring perceptions of different subjects living in Brazil. This is reflected in the way migrant populations living in the country are perceived and treated. The same receptive, hospitable behaviour towards white immigrants remains widespread in social fields, while Black migrants—generally from Haiti and African countries—suffer material and symbolic violence similar to that experienced by Black Brazilians. This also results from a specific trait of Brazilian racism: its individual expression centre around phenotypical elements. The darker someone's skin colour is, the higher the level of discrimination they can suffer directly. However, Brazilian structural and institutional racism has a broader spectrum of discrimination: it affects Black and indigenous populations in general, and inflicts a series of restrictions upon them which prevents them from achieving positions of power or socioeconomic distinction, regardless of whatever professional qualifications and repertoire they may have.

What follows is a general profile of the Haitian population in Brazil and some specific evidence gathered within the scope of the MIDEQ Hub's work. This evidence allows us to envision the conditions under which the Haitian population perceives racism in Brazil and its role in preventing due access to the set of rights required to affirm their human dignity.

The Data on Haitians in Brazil

To build a systemic reading of the universe of Haitian nationals in Brazil, we chose to first establish some general data on this group of migrants, which was extracted from microdata available through SISMIGRA, an immigration Portal by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security of the Brazilian Government.⁹ Haitians started migrating in significant numbers to Brazil in 2010, a movement which continued to increase until 2016 (Fig. 19.1). According to spoken accounts from Haitian researchers at MIDEQ Brazil and interviews with Haitians,¹⁰ since 2017, in the face of an economic crisis, many began to leave the country, heading, especially, to the USA. There are no means of knowing what number of migrants have left the country or have died here, because state agencies do not have consolidated records of it.¹¹ However, the fluctuating inflow and its distribution in terms of numbers, gender and age groups from early in the migration to 2021—the last year the federal system accounts for in its database—allows a better understanding of the dynamics of Haitian mobility. This data, in association with information collected in

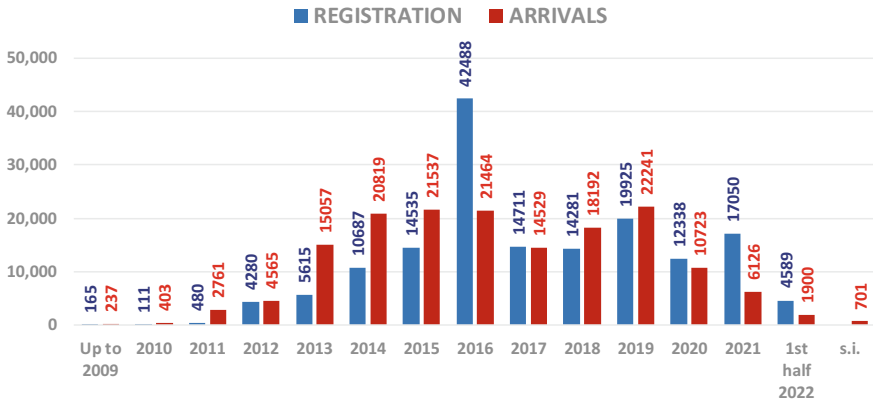


Fig. 19.1 Haitian migration to Brazil (Source Haitian Migrants per National Migration Record Year and Year of Entry Informed; Brazilian Government, Ministry of Justice and Public Security. Portal da Imigração (Immigration Portal). Microdata from 2000 to 2022)

our survey and focus group, become the means to broaden our perspective of the Haitian migrant population's perceptions, choices and strategies upon and after selecting Brazil as their destination.

According to official data¹² provided by SISMIGRA, there were 158,383 Haitian migrants in Brazil as at June 2022. The peak of the Haitian migration into the country was the period from 2014 to 2016, when the entry of about 21,000 migrants was recorded each year. The number declined soon after, despite a new high in 2019, when, at their peak, over 22,000 arrivals were recorded in a single year. After 2019, the number of Haitians entering Brazil has been gradually decreasing to the levels recorded in pre-2014. Although entry registration presents a more general overview of the flow of immigrants into the country, we should note that their registration as formal migrants by Brazilian entities points to a process of creating roots, from the pursuit of formal recognition and with it access to rights such as, for example, access to formal work.¹³ In that sense, 2016 was when Brazil registered the largest number of Haitians—with over 42,000 registrations. The large increase from previous years and the gradual process of rooting in the country are largely responsible for this.

There is a remarkably disproportionate number of men compared to women within this group of Haitians who entered the country before 2016. This has changed more recently: in the period prior to 2016, the proportion of men fluctuated in the range of 60–80% but from 2017 onwards, there was a new trend of more balanced distribution between men and women. From then on, the entry of men oscillates in the range of 54–57%, and of women,

of 43–46%. These data reveal a phenomenon whereby male family members migrate in search of security and livelihood opportunities, and through a gradual process of consolidating life in their country of destination, create the conditions for their spouse to join them. This is a very complex process, however, as it also involves the need to analyse gender relations in the socio-cultural and political contexts of Haitian society, as well as an understanding of how these relations are resignified throughout the migration process. There is, furthermore, a subsequent process in which family units start migrating together—the result of elements that offer more welcoming and less hostile conditions to migrants, i.e. a welcoming support network of Haitians already established in the country, as well as more well-prepared and mature institutional mechanisms. In this context, however, gender and racial dynamics in the Brazilian cultural context and how Haitian migrants relate to them must be considered. We will address this issue along with statements made in the focus groups conducted for our study.

A change in age patterns of migrants is also observed. Whereas before 2016 there was still a greater number of men entering the country, after this period there is not only a more balanced flow of men and women, but also a gradual increase in younger people entering the country, which points an even greater rooting process where family members move to meet with the men who arrived first, as data shows. The stories told in our focus groups reinforce this narrative, as seen below.

Haitian Migrants' Perceptions of Race and Racism in Brazil

Methodological Note

Between September 2021 and February 2022, the MIDEQ team in Brazil team collected a significant amount of primary data—through a survey, in-depth interviews and focus groups—pertaining to the universe of Haitian immigrants in Brazil. A total of 101 in-depth interviews were conducted in five Brazilian states and five focus groups were conducted in three states. This method offered regional diversity in a country of continental proportions and reflected the geography of Haitian migration in Brazil. A survey of almost 900 participants was also conducted.¹⁴ This research process was approved by Plataforma Brasil, an entity that oversees research ethical conduct in Brazil. Hiring Haitian researchers was one strategy employed by the team to facilitate the recruitment of research participants and to ensure the quality of

the collected data with respect to cultural translations. These researchers were then trained and supervised by the IMJA/MIDEQ team coordinators. As a result, all of the primary data collection had the participation and agency of Haitian researchers and interviewers. This was not an accidental decision but rather derived from an epistemological and methodological perspective. Any research with social groups must recognise their subjectivity, before anything else, and ensure agency for their standpoint not only as respondents, but also as authors of instruments and analysts of the data obtained. This epistemological perspective allows participants to break with the usual hierarchical forms that tend to characterise academic investigations.

From a methodological point of view, the decision to employ Haitian researchers and to allow respondents to complete the questionnaires in Haitian Creole allowed a more comprehensive, in-depth access to this population. With that, deeper answers were attained than would have been possible by conducting a questionnaire and interviews in Portuguese. Moreover, the identity of the respondents was preserved at all levels, according to the ethical commitments adopted.

Data Analysis

Adopting a thematic framework, we have extracted some evidence from a focus group conducted specifically on racial issues to illustrate Haitian perceptions on the issue of racism and existing inequalities in Brazil. The group included six men and one woman, all Haitians.¹⁵ It was held in Rio de Janeiro in the first half of 2022.

The participants were prompted to convey their perception of racism in Brazil, similarities, and differences in relation to Haitian society, as well as situations that they have suffered and interpreted as racial discrimination.

Being Black in Brazil as a Haitian, from Haiti, because I have a white wife, I am received one way when I'm with my wife and another alone. And I have a way of acting when I'm alone and another when I'm with my wife. (Person A, adult male)

Regarding the perception of racism, there is a widespread understanding that Black people are discriminated against in Brazil and that they are considered inferior.

I'll give you an example. Once I went to get my hair done in a salon in Ipanema and there were a lot of people before me. So, I went to lunch. I went into a

more or less fancy restaurant - in Haiti there is better – and said I was going to have lunch. The girl who worked there and was at the door said, “This is a la carte. I’m letting you know because you can only know how much you owe after you ate.” I questioned the receptionist: “are you saying I can’t eat here just because I’m Black?” I asked to call the manager and he apologised to me. (Person B, adult female)

Discussions and reflections on the issue of racism are not as frequent in Haiti as they are in Brazil.

There, rare cases of racism happen. In Brazil, it is daily. It is not that racism does not exist in our society, but it does not happen in the same way, because 94% of the population is Black – there are another 5% whites and Lebanese, who dominate society and control financial institutions. Racism is a system. When you arrive in Brazil, the vast majority do not understand racism, since it’s veiled, unlike the Dominican Republic, where racism is open. There are laws in Brazil that forbid racism, but also a system that turns a blind eye to it to reduce punishment against racism and reduces its penalties.

One respondent recalls that he did not understand what racism was, as a child, but remembers being punished for speaking Creole in the classroom in Haiti. It was written in the room “no speaking Creole here”

What 12-year-old can speak French? The children of white or rich people in Haiti, Lebanese Syrians, Americans who do business in Haiti and marry Haitians. Because you come from the countryside and can’t speak anything, your haircut is mocked because you don’t look like people from the capital. You are submitted to that for coming from a community, which is considered inferior. In Haiti we don’t see these things as racism, I began to understand that in Brazil. I don’t know a Black movement in Haiti, in Brazil it is a trend to be a militant, that is a potent thing for Brazil.

(...)

In Haiti, you can’t open a car dealership overnight, you’ll die the next day. Because you are Black, and your origin is the countryside. If you are descended from important people and politicians, if you are born in Pétion-Ville, then you can, but if you come with knowledge from outside, you are executed. Besides, a white person in Haiti is never well-regarded: if my wife, who is white, rides a motorcycle with me on the street, she will always be cursed at. On the other hand, if a person asks me and my wife for directions and we answer differently, they will go with her answer. This is an after-effect of slavery: for them, a white person would not be lying, a white person would not be late, a white person’s plans have more power. (Person A, adult male)

As Black individuals, Haitians suffer the effects of this racist stance, in addition to specific discrimination due to the widespread stigmatised representation of Haiti in Brazil: Haiti is seen as a country dominated by misery, political instability and natural disasters. Beyond that, there is a sense that their skin colour is a determinant on the way they are perceived in Brazilian society opposed to other migrants.

In college, when I say I'm Haitian, people turn away from me and don't want to do group work with me. Brazilians have no information about Haiti, they think it's all misery and natural disasters. There are many Haitians who hide their nationality, say they are Caribbean. And that causes hurt. (Person F, young male)

Brazilian society has planned racism, and it is everywhere in society. There are a 54% Black population, but the big professions, like doctors and judges, are mostly white people. So, your skin colour indicates your trajectory, because institutions outline your path and telling you how far you will go. For Haitian migrants this is visible through the enrichment of white migrants, as opposed to Black migrants. For example, when the Syrians arrived in Brazil, they were included in the Bolsa Família programme. If it weren't for the Catholic Church and pastors, who would help Haitians? (Person D, adult male)

Regarding personal experiences, respondents narrated examples of discriminatory situations in different spaces—Universities, restaurants, workspaces. There is an understanding that there is a strong correlation between being Black and being discriminated against, even as migrants (an aggravating factor), and especially for Haitians. Something that was noted by respondents was the fact that Brazil has strict legislation to criminalise racism—as well as racial harassment—while Haiti has no such legislation.¹⁶ It was noted by others, however, that in practice there are many ways to avoid compliance with that legislation, and that it does not account for structural racism. Participants were asked what measures they believed should be taken in relation to racist practices in Brazil. Regarding possible ways to confront racism, the legal pathway was pointed out as the most appropriate.

Anti-racism laws need to be toughened, and public policies created to raise awareness so that people fight and strengthen movements. (Person E, adult male)

Toughen laws because, even if it does not destroy it, it will create respect between people. (Person D, adult male)

There is, however, a critical understanding on the limits of law, the struggles for implementing legislation in practice and the need for more structural changes in society.

I believe that some laws are only on paper, because when it's time to enforce them, (nothing) is done. If the person knows they are going to be punished, they will not do it. (Person B, adult female)

This being a structural problem, it's bigger than the laws, because when it comes to enforcing those laws, the police and judges are racist, and for this reason, Brazil needs a revolution to fight racism. It does not need weapons, but a social revolution. This revolution must promote equality. There are no Black people in leadership in Brazil... (Person A, adult male)

One noteworthy statement emerging from the group, which had been expressed previously and has been repeated in subsequent face-to-face meetings with Haitian groups as well as in-depth interviews, is the idea that racism is only real if the victim cares about it. Their self-esteem and self-worth have the power to ensure that there will be no racist practices towards them, or, at least, that they will not be affected by these practices.

Most of all, I don't care about racism, because I believe in myself and I know who I am. Someone who is dealing with racism and believes in themselves will not care about it, because they know that they have plenty of value, plenty of power to fight life and get to where they want. That's it. (Person E, adult male)

This statement reflects how it can be difficult for members of Haitian society to understand Brazilian racial dynamics and how they structure social and economic inequalities, with a tendency to individualise experiences of racism rather than articulating them within wider structural issues. A similar process was seen in relation to the issues of skin colour. According to the participants, declaring racial identity itself produces racialisation, since we are, above all, humans and not more than one "race". Coincidentally, this is the argument used in Brazil by people—almost always white—who want to avoid any debate or policies to address the race issue.

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to introduce the basis of Brazilian racism and how it structures, together with sexism and institutional patrimonialism, the inequalities of Brazilian society and the particular experiences of Haitian

migrants. What is evident from the evidence presented is that the markings of Black phenotypes amplify the conditions of discrimination experienced by the Haitian population in Brazil. In addition to the Black skin markers, migrant populations from Haiti need to create more sophisticated mechanisms than migrants from other countries, especially white migrants, to overcome the barriers imposed by Brazilian structural inequalities. In that sense, the Brazilian democratic forces are facing a challenge, particularly in the field of knowledge production and public management, with the creation of epistemological, social, economic and legal responses to affirm the principle of human dignity of the Black population—both Brazilian and migrant alike. This is especially true in this moment of hope, with the defeat of the far-right government under Bolsonaro and the victory of the democratic forces in the 2022 elections. We expect that the studies and actions developed within the scope of the MIDEQ Hub and its work in Brazil, in partnership with other study groups in the South, will contribute to these advances, in a plural and comprehensive way.

A set of reflections emerge from this work, which we outline below.

Firstly, experiences of racism and discrimination are built from the social, historical and cultural context of each country, and this fact must be acknowledged. Indeed, in studies and writings that contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon of racism and its impact on the lives of migrants, the latter's views on racism must be understood in context. This will avoid a supposedly "naive" interpretation of their experiences of racism and allow a more in-depth analysis of their inclusion (or otherwise) in a new social context. Any formulation or design of public policies needs to take this into account.

Secondly, the strategies adopted by Haitian migrants within the specific context of their experiences must also be understood, as they differ from other groups of migrants, by their racial condition, which exposes them to situations similar to those experienced by the Black population in Brazil, but also imbues them with a different outlook and attitude towards the racialisation of social relations. These strategies emerge from the potency/inventive power (*potência*) of Haitian migrants, in their ability to devise solutions and responses within their life context. After all, we look to a peripheral epistemology because of a need to recognise the power of these people, and their own ability to navigate a new social context with tools that often had to be adapted, readapted and invented.

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Notes

1. More information on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) can be found at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minustah>.
2. This is the process of systematically transferring economic resources and power to privileged social groups, with legal support and especially through the state. It materialises through tax structures, credit and interest policies, the allocation of urban equipment and services to more enriched areas of the city and through privileged access to well-valued public offices by white men, especially. These are at the heart of the thinking underpinning the work of UNIPeriferias/Instituto Maria e Joao Aleixo. UNIPeriferias is a civil society organisation working to produce alternative knowledge emerging from peripheral epistemologies. We aim to work together with peripheral groups to address their struggles and contribute on the proposition of public policies that accommodate the voice and needs of peripheral groups. More about UNIPeriferias can be found at www.uniperiferias.org.br.
3. The reason for choosing Haitian migration as the topic of this article derives from the fact that it is, first and foremost, a migration of Black people, a characteristic of that country's population, as well as the fact that, through the MIDEQ Hub and the Maria and João Aleixo Institute, we developed a research and intervention project with the Haitian migrant population in Brazil. The research consisted of a survey conducted with almost 900 Haitians living in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, with focus groups on specific topics, as well as interviews with the same population living in the two states, in addition to Santa Catarina, Paraná and Rondônia. Due to space limitations, for this chapter we chose to use some statements from a focus group on issues of access to the justice systems and perceptions of racism in Brazil, conducted in the city of Rio de Janeiro with members of the Haitian community.
4. The Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) Hub unpacks the complex and multi-dimensional relationships between migration and inequality in the context of the Global South. More at www.mideq.org.
5. As an illustration, the French Revolution, as the greatest expression of bourgeois revolutions, accomplished a great historical feat by making the feudal principle that people would be naturally unequal, because of their social

origin, one that could be overcome. The idea that all are created equal—even if that equality is restricted to the law and state power—represented a true revolution from Western conceptual, legal and social points of view. The discourse of personal merit then came about as an element justifying the social condition of each subject, recognised in their differences from biology, from an ethos of hard work and even morals. “Self-made men” became an ideal type of capitalist hero—in typically sexist language, man would be the maker of himself.

6. According to a survey conducted by the Brazilian Public Security Yearbook, released in June 2020, 820,689 people have been put into the Brazilian prison system. 67.4% of them are black, which is a 3.4% increase from 2020. These data show a current scenario of mass incarceration in Brazil.
7. A favela is a constituent territory of the city characterised, in part or in its entirety, by the following references: (i) historical insufficiency of investments by the State and the formal market, especially real estate; (ii) financial and services (iii) strong socio-spatial stigmatisation, especially inferred by residents of other areas of the city; (iv) high levels of underemployment and informality in labour relations; (v) buildings predominantly characterised by self-construction, which are not guided by the parameters defined by the State; (vi) social appropriation of the territory with predominant use for housing purposes; (vii) educational, economic and environmental indicators below the average of the city as a whole; (viii) occupation of urban sites marked by a high degree of environmental vulnerability; (ix) degree of sovereignty on the part of the State lower than the average of the city as a whole; (x) high density of dwellings in the territory; (xi) population density rate above the average of the city as a whole; (xii) neighbourhood relations marked by intense sociability, with a strong appreciation of communal spaces as a meeting place; (xiii) high concentration of black people and descendants of indigenous people, according to the Brazilian region; (xiv) degree of victimization of people, especially lethal, above the city average. For an extensive discussion on the terminology and its socio-political implications see Silva et al. (2009).
8. “Quilombo is the denomination for communities of black slaves who resisted the slavery regime that prevailed in Brazil for over 300 years and was abolished in 1888. Quilombos were formed from a wide variety of processes that include the escape of slaves to free and generally isolated lands. However, freedom was also acquired through inheritance, donations and land revenues as payment for services rendered to the state or for stays on the lands they occupied and cultivated. There are also cases of land purchase both during the term of the slave regime and after its abolition. What characterized the quilombo was the resistance and the acquisition of autonomy. The formation of the quilombos represented the transition from the condition of slave to that of free peasant. (...) The quilombos continued to exist even after the end of slavery. Data from the Brazilian government indicates that today there

are 3495 quilombola communities spread across all regions of the country, from southern Brazil to the Amazon” (CPISP, SD).

9. Official government data on migration can be found at SISMIGRA <https://portaldeimigracao.mj.gov.br/pt/dados>.
10. The MIDEQ team in Brazil—a group researching the Haiti-Brazil migration corridor—collected three sets of primary data on this migrant population: a survey, qualitative interviews and focus groups. Information on the departure of a significant number of Haitian migrants to other countries, such as the United States, Canada and Chile, do not include official figures, but reflects the struggles faced by Haitians since 2015, with the economic, political and social crisis that took over Brazil.
11. Official data from the Brazilian government concern a record of the arrival of this foreign population into the country, but there is no systematised data on their exit, just as there is none on the deaths of members of the migrant population.
12. The National Migration Registry (which is mandatory to attain temporary or permanent resident permits and/or work permits) is kept by federal migration control agencies. Migrants must register in it with those agencies, but not necessarily upon arrival. Because of that, records show both the year of registration and of entry.
13. The qualitative interviews conducted by the MIDEQ Brazil team recorded that access to formal work is one of the central strategies of the Haitian migrant population to ensure their stay in the country.
14. For the survey, a single questionnaire was applied in all six migratory corridors included in the MIDEQ project, amounting to 12 countries. The questions for the in-depth interviews and focus groups were prepared by the national teams. Unfortunately, it was impossible to include the data collected through these instruments in this chapter due to space limitations, but they available by contact the authors.
15. With the exception of one gender focus group of only women and the survey—which we had previously decided would have gender parity—we struggled to find female participants for the in-depth interviews and other focus groups. This is a result of lower female presence in migration scenarios and of restrictive gender roles and relations within the Haitian migrant population.
16. Brazilian Anti-Racism Law which took place in 1989 (Brazilian Act 7.716/89).

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