Political Integration of Afro-Descendant Communities in South America—
Deliberative Democracy: Towards Strong Democracies*

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The challenge in integrating Afro-descendant communities in necessary spaces of multicultural coexistence in our region is closely tied to the lack of political modernity in Latin America and its counterpart in our hemisphere's weak democracies. I place my analysis of Cuba, my country, in this more global context, independent of whatever value any specific difference might have in a successful interpretation of our concrete history.

Of course, in taking this approach, I am attempting to distance myself from a certain, characteristically Cuban, self-centeredness that often loses sight of our equally specific place in the world.

The matter of integrating Afro-descendants is essentially political, but in its cultural dimension, it has to do with paradigms that have been inscribed by everything concerning the Latin American independence struggles that enshrined the *criollo* imaginary in three basic ways: in quintessentially Catholic and white countries; census republics founded upon property, the liberal professions and representation; and centralist States controlled by militarism or a more or less modernized version of an alliance between the armed forces and white elite. To this, we should add a not necessarily modernizing, developmental logic that gave some sense to the Latin American socioeconomic process. That way, one has all the ingredients necessary for achieving a hegemony that could make invisible the multicultural matrix at the root of our region's probable nations.

The domination introduced on the indigenous cultures best expresses this successful process of dysfunctionality and lack of communication between more or less successful nation-States and more or less failed ones. The most visible and referential examples of this structured schizophrenia can be found in Chiapas, Mexico, and in the reinvention of the nation-State engineered by Evo Morales, in Bolivia. There are other, similar processes, visibly and invisibly under way, and they may be about to explode. In all these examples, what is at hand is an attempt to synchronize the nation-State with its cultural premises.

Are the Chiapas phenomenon and the Evo Morales's Bolivian reinvention the answers or outs most consistent with the challenge of the political integration or our nations within the context of their multicultural matrices? The options may vary, and indeed they do, depending on the way we see that other concept without which Latin America can be thought about or understood: democracy.

My point of departure with this analysis seems clear: Latin American nations and societies are not sufficiently integrated because they are not sufficiently democratic. This shortcoming is dual and mutually reinforces itself. If social inequalities undermine democracy, because they reveal a failure in the equitable redistribution of opportunities and benefits, they do not, however, weaken cultural integration within a nation. What we have is a classic case of disintegrated societies within nations possessing a compact imaginary: Haiti. What does undermine national integration

in pluralistic societies is the lack of a cultural presence of said plurality in public spaces. In many of our nations, there is an assumed continuity between a social fissure and a cultural absence of difference—from within that difference—in politics.

To be clear, the nations of our hemisphere may be more or less democratic in the classic, liberal sense, but they are not, in a cultural one.

Only politics can resolve this. What politics? Whichever comes closest to the multicultural underpinnings of our nations, and opts for the most democratic tools in our debates.

In this sense, and from a culturally sensitivity that includes multiculturalism and multiracialism, my hypothesis is that the framework upon which Latin America's democracies were constructed is too limited and insufficient to take into account today's three most pressing matters: multiculturalism, distributed equity, and the individual acknowledgement of people as having fundamental rights and a need to autonomously participate politically, i.e., being citizens fully possessed of their own identities.

These limitations and insufficiencies are not functional, but structural.

The cycle of electoral democracy and representational democracy is not in a position to correct our nations' lack of democratic integration, considering their cultural underpinnings. In fact, this cycle produces and reproduces political marginalization based on cultural difference because, as we know, it is anchored to the political paradigm of the popular majority that has till now guaranteed the circulation of the hegemonic elite and, consequently, cultural racism. Is the concept of a majority fundamentally democratic in multicultural nations?

At this point, it would be good to highlight what just happened in the recent elections in the United States. If in 1992 a high-level advisor to former President Bill Clinton was still able to stay 'It's the economy, stupid,' when referring to the most dynamic force for the American electorate, by 2012, others began to view the democratic game in pluralistic societies by saying 'It's demography, stupid.' New majorities come about when many cultural minorities are more or less virtuously joined. This guaranteed a second term for Barack Obama in the White House.

If the concept of a majority is a political one, and cannot take the place of legitimacy, when political decisions are made, the question is if this concept has the legitimacy to determine the quality and nature of decisions taken in the political and public realm. Majorities can be as discriminatory as minorities and, thus, affect the quality of the public coexistence of the plurality, and political legitimacy based upon culture as a differential given when considering citizenship and rights.

Cuba is an incredibly excellent example of this Latin American phenomenon, one that is expressed even in its Constitution, in its Article 5, which consecrates the legal, cultural superiority of a hegemonic group in shaping the State's political will. One could consult the Cuban constitution, but I'd rather include the article here, to give visual force to my argument.

Article 5. The Communist Party of Cuba, a follower of Martí's ideas and of Marxism-Leninism, and the organized vanguard of the Cuban nation, is the highest leading force of society and of the State, which organizes and guides the common effort toward the goals of the construction of socialism and the progress towards a communist society.

What this means is that a bunch of identity and elective minorities in Cuba—the most active of whom are religious or homosexual—are discriminated against in the name of a minority of more or less a million, putative voters.

What is the analytic importance of a constitutional article for exploring a subject linked to multiculturalism?

The way I see it, in Cuba it is not yet understood that racism on the island is nourished in two ways I consider most important: as a cultural institution and as a derived political institution, i.e., as a feeling of superiority in the midst of cultural diversity, and political discrimination borne from this constructed feeling of superiority. Thus, if modern racism was born due to skin color, cultural racism situates it in second place; to then base itself on the only thing that has allowed it to persist till now: diverse, cultural conceptions of life.

Racist discrimination gets articulated from within culture through symbols. We must remember that symbols are signification, and culture, which operates through symbols, is the stuff of which significations and signifiers are made. Thus, it is semiotic and gives sense and meanings that must be interpreted. In speaking of culture, we are speaking of structures of signification.

Racism, understood as staring with skin color—its somatic symbol—would not deserve to be analyzed nor do I consider it essential, if it were not for the fact it covers up racism towards those deeper, well structured significations that organize the sense of other experiences within Cuban culture.

This blend of structured significations shapes and is shaped via an anthropological perspective known to all and not yet overcome. It talks to us about primary and secondary thought processes, and creates a distinction between cultural structures and modes of thought. According to this Eurocentric view, human groups lacking cultural resources such as science (read Marxism) are judged *ipso facto* as lacking a real capacity for understanding thinking generated by secondary thought processes. There is an iron-clad syllogistic logic to be found between this line of thinking and the concept 'superior modes' of thinking, which is precisely from whence Marxist-Leninism is derived.

This perfect, political-cultural institutionalization of racism has not been detected properly due to the exclusively political focus with which certain ideologies are seen.

At first sight, they seem to be the most pertinent focuses. Certainly, ideology is a structured reaction to social tensions that are equally structured in any society. Yet, what the first focus misses is that ideologies also provide a symbolic out from those tensions. They become a special kind of symbolic symbol aimed at an evaluative integration of the collectivity, which causes them to struggle to occupy the same space they are and have been occupying, or that other, culturally constructed; symbolic systems are on their way to losing.

The second focus is more persistent and pleasant: it assumes Marxism takes an immanently progressive path in the two most usual senses—human progress and scientific progress. This is the ideological apparatus that the Cuban State needed to codify racial discrimination and the exclusion of the Cuban nation's inherent multiculturalism, thus delegitimizing the very society (which is quintessentially multicultural) upon which it intended to construct emancipation. The paradoxical tension produced by this institutionalized rhetoric is natural: Afro-descendants enter the process with their color, but void of identity.

So what happens to the other, profound, cultural significations, norms of behavior, senses of coexistence and concepts of life that are appropriated and re-appropriated by human groups from their specific symbolic matrices?

It is as a result of that epistemological rupture in the political and ideological camp that symbolic, cultural camp of legitimacy, capabilities and rights gets configured, and then defines participation—in its many shapes and forms—in the public space, and that of the State. Racism becomes institutionalized like a prohibitive structure imposed on diverse symbolic systems for participating in civic spaces, which is where authentic legitimacy stems from. Thus, a Eurocentric perspective captures Cuban politics, the Cuban State and Cuban society, and marginalizes multiculturalism, the only space in which the democratic process and racial integration can be authenticated.

This specific development in Cuba sums up and condenses, leading to what are ultimate consequences—a hegemonic, *criollo* rhetoric typical of the region, which in each place took on individual characteristics.

Cuba's hegemonic, historical narrative has always viewed multiculturalism and multi-raciality as being in a subordinate and subjected position: as an object. This narrow, aerial view does not allow one to visualize creative options and the social mimesis that motivated Afro-descendants and made them subjects of a possible history—since the beginning. They were only seen and explained as objects of another history, one in which they either accepted the roles they were given or reacted to unbearable situations like slavery, or became alienated in ritual reproduction and sociological criminality.

That's why subalternity is not only a real fact, but also a focus and position constructed as imaginaries. It is a focus that hides that other real history that is finding its place from within subalternity's gaps, to demonstrate that Afro-descendants offer not only their social rebellion, but also options for an alternative history of Cuba that does not need to be proven to reveal its possibilities. This is why I think that Cuba's counter-emancipatory history does not begin with social and political action on the part of the *criollo* elite, but rather with the story it tells of the social reality of the others, of Afro-descendants, that has been taking place right under their very noses. One might say that in the beginning, it *was* the story.

In this sense, the development of Cuba's rich ethnography hid an important part of the social history of Afro-descendants and allowed for the establishment of the myth of blacks as uncivilized subjects in the national imaginary, capable only of pagan rituals, classless crime, purposeless, characterless violence, and lazy folklore centered on the body's plasticity—either in music or sports. And, for that which is most interesting to us in this social story, the myth that Afro-descendants are ontologically poor.

If Cuba's greatest ethnologist, Fernando Ortiz, did a good job of advancing understanding of racial difference, establishing undeniable roots in his literature, José Antonio Saco, the architect of the foundation for the *criollo* model, whose master lines still govern us, offered tips necessary for situating Afro-descendants in a modern context and scrutinizing the answers and ability to overcome the challenges of an involuntary modernization. In a distracted manner, Saco even offers the best argument, as a historical source, for studying Afro-descendants as fully modern, economic subjects, and for deconstructing the hegemonic story that controls the Cuban nation's incomplete nation-building and democratic project.

Why did the national narrative fuel the ethnographic one and undo the social narrative that came before it by more than a hundred years? Answer: the *criollo* narrative found it convenient to link blacks to a pre-modern imaginary as an ideological premise for their own social hegemony. *Criollos* trample history not because their social hegemony is guaranteed, but rather because they construct a forced hegemony anchored in diminished, cultural difference.

As has been shown in important, recent essays published by important writers like Cubans Juan Benemelis, Iván César Martínez or Ileana Faguaga (the first two residing outside Cuba), one might say that Cuba's Afro-descendants are poor today by *criollo* hegemony's historic mandate.

Seen this way, racism has a fundamental connotation for the entire, Cuban, nation-building project, and it goes beyond any ethnic impact. It concerns a structural maladjustment between an ascendant economy's modernity and a culturally regressive, political elite. This maladjustment is rare in the Western hemisphere, because Cuba was the only country in which the elite dangerously divorced itself from its own economic conquests—it committed virtual suicide. The reason has nothing to do with the social fissures produced by accelerated, yet unequal, economic growth. Instead, it is because of the cultural endogamy of the Hispanic (Spanish descended) nature of the political milieu. As in any other country, this endogamy led to only one place: to oligarchy and concomitant authoritarianism. Why was a formally liberal nation a nest for so powerful an authoritarian tendency? Because of it endogamy, which closed itself off from the social circulation of difference in all its spaces, even the economy.

I would like to continue skirting my socioeconomic analysis according to its capital impact on future options for Afro-descendants, from the very autonomy necessary for any multicultural, democratizing proposal to be politically viable—even if its only effect is to dissipate ethnic pessimism regarding modernization—in Cuba, at least.

From José Antonio Saco to Iván César Martínez, there is very rich material that can be studied to arrive at important conclusions regarding the economy for Afro-descendants in Cuba, the most fundamental of which shows us that ethno-racial inequality originates with a cultural model that frames the distribution of economic resources in our society, via the constant, forced readjustment of political order, either through political violence or symbolic violence. It was not slavery that fatally predetermined the future economic options for Afro-descendants in Cuba, nor capitalism that anticipated their proletarianization. Their fate, as in their destiny as slaves, ended with the end of slavery. If this perception persisted in the minds of many as a sociocultural phenomenon, this has nothing to do with economic reality. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the wealthiest *criollos* were not the former slave owners. Likewise, those who had been freed were not kept from escaping extreme poverty by entering the new labor market, by the hindrances they had as slaves only a decade earlier. They can't do it because they have a different color.

In a modern economy, and Cuban had one every since the second half of the nineteenth century, society's wealth was not necessarily tied to the economic fortunes of a particular class or sector. This mercantilist focus does not make for a nation's prosperity; on the contrary. Imperial Spain should have been the richest center of all times.

Thus, the economic sustainability of deliberative democracy demands the removal of the extra-economic obstacles that take root in the cultural and political imaginary of the elites, and an epistemological rupture with the paradigms that made and make democracy coincide with the worn models that have served our region.

For this to happen, it is absolutely necessary to break with the means-end view at the root of politics; a weakly social and instrumental view that only serves the experts, the power elites and professional politicians, and avoids the cultural, multicultural and multiracial citizenry, relegating it to a merely aesthetic or testimonial existence.

This model, with its totalitarian and democratic-electoral versions is coming to an end.

Notwithstanding, it has deep roots in our region. It is interesting that precisely in a place like Cuba, where the new, multicultural nature of our civil society and politics is not understood or taken into account, the exclusive use of a typical, electoral and representative democracy's rules are reproduced and used by historically dominated cultures. They do so within a populist context that, on the other hand, attempts to return to community rule, which represses the minimal freedom required in any democratic exercise. Those cultures tend to express themselves within the hegemonic framework they have fought against for years. In the worst of cases, they resort to a democratic regression through their emphasis on the community and their disdain for the individual, and the citizenry, as central values in democracy. This would be assuming a reinforcement of racist models that block democracy as a value and democratization as a possibility. The effects are clear: a cyclical revisiting of discrimination and marginality, which is now tied to identity.

If we take another look at the Bolivian case, we see it a as a portentous phenomenon, namely how the political emergence of indigenous culture in our hemisphere is becoming ruined on account of the appropriation and deviation of a referent belonging to the deciding majority, one that in the past assumed domination and hegemony over the so-called ancestral cultures. This leads to reinforced racist and exclusionary models. It is quite another thing for this exclusionary exercise to be successful in the long run with vigorous, *criollo* elites.

A complex culture requires a complex democracy. At the present time, a historic and structural analysis clearly reveals, even in the context of what I know to be Cuba's lack of information, that Latin America cannot rid itself of its dysfunctionalities because it has not constructed a cultural paradigm, intellectual references, theoretical framework and civil space that reflects the plurality of its origin. The response continues being traditional, and the reaction conservatives opt for is scandal when racial consciousness in the Americas names Afro-descendants, which is why we are asked what the confusion is between a census, electoral citizenry, and a cultural citizenry. Aren't we all Argentines, Peruvians, Nicaraguans, Hondurans, Colombians, Brazilians, Cubans, etc.?

Yet, even in places where miscegenation has made great progress as a fact and concept, as in the case of Brazil, we see the emergence of an Afro-descendant consciousness that has required a solid, deep debate about racial issues, which has caused miscegenation to be considered a refined response to cultural racism, and the implementation of State policies that redefine the game of opportunities and participation with certain, multiracial societies and nations.

Examples like Colombia, Honduras and Costa Rica are also interesting. They reveal that Afro-descendants advance in their rights and that some Latin American countries have the completion of their nations in plain view.

Societies move towards fragmentation and plurality, which reflects the beginning of an emergency, can be seen as delimited by the impoverishment and weakening of the electoral-representative model as an exclusive tool for the political integration of historically marginalized sociocultural groups.

Here, there is an issue of political mutation we cannot ignore. Citizens are contesting our current democracy, because they assume they have rights. Voting to elect someone does not seem sufficient for responding to the needs, dissatisfaction of a citizenry, that more often than not, has access to global communication, more information, a subordination of decisions, autonomy, and civil society's strong dynamism. If we add to this the strong autonomies generated from within cultural identity as determinants of how citizenship is exercised, we would have greater clarity regarding the limitations of democracies constructed via a simple model of electing representatives with a logic that recirculates the same elites belonging to iron-clad, ruling parties that are closed to new, multiple or compounded citizens.

My idea aligns itself with the concept of incremental democracy (strong democracy), based on deliberative democracy, which privileges the orderly participation of all voices. This doesn't mean substituting representative democracy the way one might disconnect from certain revolutionary ideas—in terms of possible violence, but rather integrating processes at different levels, and thus fortifying the legitimacy of the political process. This would mean having to bring citizen autonomy, cultural citizenship and the exercise of sovereignty closer together. I see sovereignty with cynical realism, because the exercise of freedom is not compatible with sovereignty. Much less is it about exercising freedom of identity.

It seems to me that deliberative democracy is the best answer possible to the challenges of democracy, generally, and the appropriate response to the integration and participation of Afro-descendants within the broadest communities in which they interact.

The integration of Afro-descendants, as well as indigenous communities, women, homosexuals and our religious diversity, in addition to our global citizenry, brings to the table of democracy the subject of the cultural citizenship that emerged in developed nations like the United States, and all over other parts of the planet.

Deliberative democracy offers structural advantages for taking on cultural challenges and deficits in the integration of Afro-descendants within a broader, rich and creative plurality, while considering the new, global map of autonomous minorities within civil society—something that also applies to Cuba. In this sense, it is curious and interesting that the cultural openings that are taking place in my country are cropping up all over the place, like recoveries of the past—in the plural. Some of these rescues are still filtered through those in power, who are more likely to privilege a cultural fact than the idea of rights. Here, as elsewhere, we are witnessing an authentic policy for restoration via the recovery of repressed identities.

So, what are the advantages of deliberative democracy in the midst of this recovery of cultural identities, especially that of Afro-descendants?

The first is that deliberative democracy is *par excellence* grounded in the concept of plurality. To deliberate means a diversity of subjects conversing or dialoguing from their differences. Irremediably, this must imply the visibility of the 'other' or 'others' within the community. The second is the idea of self-government that this deliberation entails. To be aware of self-government in Latin America legitimizes indigenous communities' traditional forms of power. Yet, it is not totally satisfactory because it alienates cultural 'others' and does not consider people's individual rights. Nevertheless, and this is extremely important, self-government allows for the full expression of identities, which should be regulated in the civil space by an equal presence of 'others. The third advantage is that deliberative democracy allows for controversy, for cultural conflicts, in a reasoned way.

In reality, there are two, connected advantages here: the use of reason, which critiques its own values, and the rational exchange of diverse values via deliberation. This can result in the consensus needed in shared lives, from within a situation of difference, and greater and more refined democracy. Such is the case, as U.S. theoretician Benjamin Barber has masterfully explained, because citizenship *is* deliberation—that need to see one's self through the lens of others, thinks much of one's self as of others, and put the interests of the community in a broader perspective.

Workshop on "Deliberative Democracy" in Cuba, hosted by the Nuevo País Project

The fourth advantage is that democracy is born of civic culture, and it cannot take shape in a manner truly foreign to the manifestation of all identities. Religious groups have a very solid civic culture because the expression of their identities fortifies their values, which neither depends on, nor needs the State to reproduce their virtues. Frequently, this civic quality born of identity halts to the tendencies of States to infringe upon freedoms.

By way of a key, fifth advantage, this means that for Afro-descendants to be integrated, democracy could be understood and forged from below, and not above, as it has habitually been understood in Latin America.

The sixth advantage on which deliberative democracy depends assumes there will be frank and informed conversation. Their frankness means that all perspectives are taken into account, free of pressures or schizophrenia. As such, individuals should be free, totally free, because frankness means not civically hiding their identities. There is no need for it. On the other hand, informed means that the goal is the most and best information, both general and current, about the others, and their differences, which is essential for a dialog free of or with few cultural prejudices. This is absolutely basic for acknowledging diverse identities in a level, equitable dialog. This is the only way in which any notion of cultural superiority, such as that of *criollo* and racist hegemony, can be undermined.

The seventh advantage is that what is taken for median democracy cannot do without pluralistic values. Median democracy is a combination of decisions, public policies, determinations and

resolutions that politicians, administrators and judges have to deal with on a daily basis to resolve conflicts. Permanent deliberation from a position of diverse identities creates an inevitable substrate so that those decisions respect these identities and the public consequences they create. We think of indigenous conflicts with their central governments in South America and we see Chile as an example of rights over ancestral lands. Permanent deliberation would allow for new focuses and new solutions to such and other matters.

There are other advantages we can use to defend the deliberative democracy model as a tool for the social and political integration of Afro-descendant communities, specifically, or any other type of minority, in general. Further study of the subject, which is what I have been engaged in, would offer subtler but less obvious ideas that would support my central hypothesis: in procedural democracies, with their emphasis on voting, or constitutional democracies, with their social contract, the challenges and obstacles involved in integrating Afro-descendant cannot be dealt with or even considered, exclusively. If we want to see our people participating more fully in our nations, we must move forward to a greater, radical deepening of democracy, one that rescues politics for citizens.

We must think in terms of strong democracies because this is vital to the survival of our communities' identities and the fundamental rights of Afro-descendants. The possibility that a democracy's citizens might not only be professional politicians, those at the helm, has a lot to do with the political process opening up to natural and cultural citizens. Furthermore, deliberative democracy is at the threshold of these strong democracies we need in order to redefine and complete our nation-States from within our nation-States, as a multi-stepped process towards the exercise of non-sovereign power.

I believe that the political reinvention of Cuba should and could begin with an introduction of the concept of strong democracy at a unique time in which all its social actors are seeking and redefining legitimacies.

They engage in so complex a process, essentially we need to move forward to complementary projects. First, we must revise certain views of defensive identities. Some sort of theory about Afro-descendants, not unlike the one developed by U.S. thinker Judith Butler about feminism, which revolutionized the phenomenon's vigorous, third wave, will probably be necessary. Her basic premise caused profound reflection with its affirmation that the woman of feminism simply did not exist. It was not her intention to deny tangible women, but to reanalyze the female subject in a new, pluralistic context that was evident in the same subject, and in order to create an opening in the public rhetoric about gender identity, which was very centered on itself, and thus defensive, in the annals of feminism in the 1970s and 1980s.

Something along these lines seems necessary for Afro-descendant subjects, not to dissolve them in their life stories, regarding their cultural coexistence, social imaginary, their worldview concerning the place and hierarchy of men and women in society, in their specific ethical and moral beliefs, but rather to guarantee introspection into their own plurality and gain movement out towards public space, toward the community of others. This is so it dissolves the hegemonic narrative according to which Afro-descendants lock themselves within their wounded and angry identity, and they create projects only for themselves. The others, the elites, with their weighty baggage, have no problem with their conscience and *do* have global and inclusive projects. This is what those who criticize entropic multiculturalism most point out.

The appropriate and defense of deliberative democracy can be that universal point of view that is defended and assumed by the minority. Minorities are visible and assimilated, not because they

disappear as an identity group, but because they demonstrate a capacity to make their world and view of the political scene seem universal. A full spectrum of deliberative processes and their tools are essential to the nature of those identity worlds and the need for democratic radicalization that subalterns demand.

In *Las guerrilleras*, French woman Monique Wittig proposes that we engage in fundamental reflection, so that feminism can interact with masculine heterosexuality, which she considered useful for Afro-descendants. This universalizing of the minority is basic for Cuba's Afro-descendants because we must understand that as Afro-descendants, we are a minority. I would even agree that official demographic statistics accurately reflect the tradition mentality of sociological whitening we inherited from José Antonio Saco's nation-building project. Black people are not the minority that successive, republican censuses have tried to mathematize till the present day. Yet, Afro-descendants *are* a minority.

African descendancy is somewhat different from genealogy. It is the construction and knowledge of an identity discovering itself as a culture and history, from its genealogical origins. A cultural and political project that will incorporate them is being drafted as we speak. This project must know how to move from identity to the public space and from the public space to identity, in a reflexive way, while it seeks its insertion without reproducing the norms and models that excluded us. In this sense, my proposal is a self-reflexive, African descendancy that constructs an open-structured identity like the one proposed by feminism. Deliberative democracy is once again before us like a model that allows for the recovery of the concept of governability thoroughly pondered by Hanna Arendt and Michel Foucault, one that can be critically analyzed in James Tully's work.

That governability is described as relations based upon inter-subjective acknowledgment, power, modes of behavior and liberating strategies. *All* these elements are crucial.

An empowerment of power, in a horizontal manner, in a way that means *ability to*, and leveling the social and political game that structurally denies power as meaning *domination of,* which is self-reproduced power and is autonomous from any traditional, hierarchical view of politics, is urgent for identity politics. This is possible through deliberative democracy. It's the only way to settle three challenges: racial integration, interracial dialogue from within the Afro-descendant imaginary, and equality in public spaces.

The second project involves the necessary democratization of the hegemonic stories and narratives that have fixed our place, destiny and even a number in our plural societies. Becoming visible is part of strong democratic processes in our hemisphere. In the end, to paraphrase Isaac Asimov, the success of deliberative democracy rests in the guaranteed possibility to affirm that your identity is equal to mine in a democracy.

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