



## Disadvantaged Groups and the Value of Diversity within Contemporary Brazilian Trade Unionism: A case study

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### Abstract

This study examines the debate over disadvantaged groups and valuing diversity in one specific sector of Brazilian trade unionism, that formed by faculty associations and trade unions in federal public institutions of higher education. Few key issues are addressed, such as the process in which the debate mentioned above has been incorporated into these associations' and trade unions' agendas; modernization of reflection about inequality in Brazilian society; the dependency on individuals linked to vulnerable groups; or the predominance of white men in the universities faculties. The sources used in the study were of two types: interviews of 17 trade union leaders from different universities, and documents, such as working reports, produced by trade unions and posted on their websites.

### Key Words

Brazilian Unionism – Class-oriented corporatism – Inequality – Diversity - Disadvantaged groups

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**Grupos desfavorecidos y el valor de la diversidad  
en el sindicalismo brasileño contemporáneo:  
Un estudio de caso**

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## Resumen

Este estudio examina el debate sobre los grupos desfavorecidos y la valoración de la diversidad en un sector específico del sindicalismo brasileño, formado por asociaciones de docentes y sindicatos en instituciones públicas federales de educación superior. Se abordan algunas cuestiones clave, como el proceso a través del cual el debate mencionado anteriormente se ha incorporado a las agendas de estas asociaciones y sindicatos; la modernización de la reflexión sobre la desigualdad en la sociedad brasileña; la dependencia del protagonismo de individuos vinculados a grupos vulnerables; o el predominio de los hombres blancos en las facultades de las universidades. Las fuentes utilizadas en el estudio fueron de dos tipos: entrevistas a 17 líderes sindicales de diferentes universidades y documentos, como informes de trabajo, producidos por sindicatos y publicados en sus sitios web.

## Palabras Clave

Sindicalismo Brasileño – Corporativismo de Clase – Desigualdad – Diversidad – Grupos Desfavorecidos

## **Introduction**

The Brazilian redemocratization process, beginning as the decade of the 1970s moved into the 1980s, favored the emergence of an ample contingent of new social actors, while allowing others to reconstruct themselves from both organizational and ideological points of view. It was within this context that the Black and feminist movements, which up until that moment had been suffocated by the civil-military dictatorship, gained new vigor to express their demands more freely within the public sphere. It was also within this historical scenario that what we today refer to as the Brazilian LGBT movement began to take shape.

At the same time, an already existing part of the trade union movement began to operate on the basis of new ideological and programmatic perspectives. It redefined its underlying beliefs, established a more direct relationship with its rank and file, attempted to deconstruct the links that subordinated it to the government, and was pushed ahead by new leadership. Through this complex process, unionism both maintained relevant characteristics from earlier stages and underwent a metamorphosis. Over time, and despite its attempt to preserve historical specificities such as its class orientation, Brazilian trade unionism was also obliged to incorporate the demands of new struggles, particularly those linked to what came to be called 'the new trade unionism'. The adoption of issues connected to the so-called disadvantaged<sup>2</sup> groups is a prime example of the different dynamics through which this new unionism took shape.

Given the vast territorial expanse that constitutes the Brazilian nation and the similarly enormous number of trade unions that exist here, it comes as no surprise that the process we discuss in this paper was a highly differentiated one. This variation is expressed both temporally and in terms of traits and characteristics.

The educational field was one of the social sectors which most rapidly, albeit still at a slow pace, took up such debates and began to engage in actions linked to disadvantaged groups and issues of diversity. Thus, we began our research on the new trade unionism within the educational field expecting to find pertinent debate on these themes consolidated therein. For this same reason, we started out from the premise

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<sup>2</sup> Disadvantaged groups are understood here as groups historically subjected to adverse and unequal life conditions (Black people and lesbians, for example) as compared to groups that enjoy privilege or less unfavorable conditions, such as white men and heterosexual women.

that trade unions linked to public institutions of higher education would also possess a considerable legacy of debate and, most importantly, of practice, around these new issues. This was a hypothesis derived from the fact that it was within public universities, and most notably those linked to the federal government, where the largest and most qualified amount of scientific knowledge on disadvantaged groups, vulnerability, diversity and other connected topics has been produced. There has been much work done within Brazilian academia on the history of feminism, on the insurrections of enslaved Black people in the 19th century, on forms of control over the bodies of women and homosexuals, on educational inequality among Blacks and whites, on wage inequality between women and men, etc<sup>3</sup>. For this reason, it would not be foolhardy to imagine this type of knowledge making its mark on external actors (such as the social movements that often turned to these studies for arguments on which to base the elaboration of their demands<sup>4</sup>) particularly in the case of those actors who were the closest, the unions and professional associations representing federal public university faculty. With this hypothesis in mind, we began to examine the way in which union organizations linked to these universities brought debates on disadvantaged groups and the value of diversity into their agenda. We were interested in understanding how this occurred, to what extent there was ensuing institutionalization, and what kinds of gains were made.

For these purposes, we began with a mapping out of pertinent union entities (totaling 56), all of which were linked to one of the two other major national university faculty associations: the National Union of Higher Education Faculty (Sindicato Nacional dos Docentes do Ensino Superior - ANDES-SN) and the Federation of Federal Institutions of Higher, Basic and Technological Education Teachers Unions (Federação de Sindicatos de Professores e Professoras de Instituições Federais de Ensino Superior e de Ensino Básico e Tecnológico - PROIFES), which came into being in 1981 and 2006, respectively.

This step was followed by interviews which we carried out over the course of the years 2017 and 2018, with 17 union leaders (4 presidents, 3 vice-presidents, 3

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<sup>3</sup> Green, James, *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1999. Hahner, June. "Feminism, Women's Rights, and the Suffrage Movement in Brazil, 1850-1932". *Latin American Research Review*, 15, 1980, 65-11. Reis, João, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia*, Johns Hopkins Paperbacks, Baltimore, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Góis, João, "Policy analysis in non-governmental organisations and the implementation of pro-diversity policies". In Vaitsman, Jeni, Ribeiro, José and Lobato, Lenaura (eds.), *Policy analysis in Brazil*, Policy Press, Bristol, 2013, 179-195.

secretaries, 4 members of the fiscal council and 3 treasurers) from different universities<sup>5</sup> involved in the above-mentioned issues. Interviewees were chosen keeping our goal of maintaining a certain balance of women, men, LGBT people and Black women and men in mind. Yet this initial criteria was only partially applied, as the interviewing process ran into a variety of obstacles (regarding locale, availability, scarcity of funding, etc). Interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed according to theme and argument. We also obtained data through documents (work reports, educational material, projects, etc.) that were available online, through the sites that the pertinent professional associations and other unions maintained. In this text we focus on the results obtained and analyses carried out around the following themes: 1) the process of incorporation of the debate on disadvantaged groups and diversity within the associations and unions' agenda; 2) the factors that contributed to and the obstacles to such incorporation; and 3) its current status. These topics are preceded in their presentation by a prior discussion providing a historical overview of trade unionism in Brazil, emphasizing its ideological frameworks.

### **Building class identity in the workers' and trade union movement. First steps**

The Brazilian trade union movement was born of the troubled crisis period that characterized the transition from 19th to 20th centuries. Its demonstrations and activities took on the greatest proportion in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, urban centers in which industrialization moved ahead most vigorously. Workers' earliest demands emerged in response to the precariousness of their living and working conditions, as revealed in the miserable conditions that prevailed in the tenements, in poor working class diets, low wages, the unhealthy conditions within factories, long workdays and rigid regimes of discipline which included fines and corporal punishment.<sup>6</sup>

Miserable conditions of existence made it very difficult for workers to develop an identity that could distinguish them clearly from the unemployed, beggars and

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<sup>5</sup> Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF); Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri (UFVJM); Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA); Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG); Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV); Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ); Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ); Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (UFOP); Instituto Federal do Paraná (IFPR); and Instituto Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (IFRS). Due to ethical principles the name of the interviewees were omitted in this article.

<sup>6</sup> Pinheiro, Paulo e Hall, Michael, *A Classe operária no Brasil – documentos (1989 a 1930)*, Ed. Alfa Ômega, São Paulo, 1979, 40.

criminals who made up what were at that time referred to as the 'dangerous classes'. It is no coincidence that a work ethic comes to play a fundamental role in the formation of the identity and way of thinking of the Brazilian working class. The construction of the notion of the 'good worker' (one who maintains a distance from vices such as alcoholism) runs through the discourses of a wide range of currents within the union movement. With the 'cult of work', a constitutive element of bourgeois thinking, taking on a key position within its own discourse, the union movement began to define its identity and garner greater legitimacy for workers and their demands<sup>7</sup>.

If the work ethic stands out here as an element of convergence in bourgeois and working class identities, the formation of trade union organizations brought out class antagonisms. Organizations that represented different categories of workers carved out the space for a break with the notion of the 'good worker'. This process of collective identity formation was built as an element of legitimation of working class interests, in opposition to the interests of big capitalists. In this sense, it is through their associations that the working class built its class identity, placing issues of the redistribution of wealth and, in more structural terms, a moral challenge to the capitalist system itself, on its agenda.

The expansion of European anarchist and socialist movements contributed to the legitimacy of the class discourse of the Brazilian trade union movement. It is here we must remember that both in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo a significant part of the working class was made up of foreigners. In 1890, for example, 92% of the São Paulo working class was made up of foreigners, mostly Europeans, a proportion that dropped significantly after 1920<sup>8</sup>. This helped to promote socialist and anarchist ideas in the country. Let us consider here some of the elements that demonstrate the important role that these two political currents played in the configuration of trade unions but also political parties and in Brazil.

Particularly between 1890 and 1904, the union movement did not represent workers sufficiently. It was extremely difficult to organize workers through a class-based discourse, due to such factors as the existence of a large mass of intermittent workers. Nonetheless, this did not stop leadership, influenced by socialist ideas, from publishing

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<sup>7</sup> Batalha, Cláudio, "Identidade da classe operária no Brasil (1880-1920): atipicidade ou legitimidade", *Revista Brasileira de História*, São Paulo, 12, 1992, 119-120.

<sup>8</sup> Pinheiro, Paulo e Hall, Michael, *A Classe operária no Brasil – documentos (1989 a 1930)*, 47.

newspapers such as the *Voice of the People* nor forming political parties such as the Central Worker's Party. This party, which in addition to its organizational functions devoted itself both to promoting the socialist revolution and launching electoral candidates, became a prototype of trade union federation. It took part in the struggle to alter the articles of the 1890 Penal Code that outlawed workers' moratoriums and strikes. Furthermore, it offered a series of services to its members in the areas of education, social aid and recreation. Through the class-oriented newspapers and associations that the socialists of that time put together, we can assert that, although the movement had radical segments, another part of it was made up of people who believed that class struggle could be waged through the mechanisms of liberal democracy, such as electoral processes and negotiations that used the strike as a last resort.

In addition to the socialists, the workers' movement of the period was also influenced by anarchists who became involved in a cycle of strikes extending itself over the first two decades of the 20th century. In fact, they took on a leadership role during what became a quite impactful series of strikes that went on between 1916 and 1919<sup>9</sup>.

Anarchist leadership contested socialist proposals that, in their view, sought primarily to constitute a workers' party and thereby structure participation through the institutions of official politics. For the former, this type of participation served to divide the working classes that were made up of considerable ethnic variety, spurring frequent conflict within the movement which in turn made it difficult to organize on the basis of a class agenda. On this issue, we are able to discern that the class perspective that the anarchists advocated sought to impose itself over the ethnic issues that permeated workers' daily lives. Unfavorable to participation in the official political system, anarchist leadership argued that the union movement should act through 'unions of resistance' engaging in direct action (strikes, boycotts, sabotage, etc.) to confront the bosses and the State<sup>10</sup>.

With the creation of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) in 1922, the trade union movement largely aligned itself with the communist perspective. Unlike the anarchist unions, the PCB included a reformist platform in its programs, catering to the desires of

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<sup>9</sup> Gomes, Ângela, *A invenção do trabalhismo*, Editora FGV, Rio de Janeiro, 2005, 81-82.

<sup>10</sup> Gomes, Ângela, *A invenção do trabalhismo*, 85-86.

the movement's rank and file<sup>11</sup>.

### **The Workers' Movement in Brazil and the construction of corporatism**

In 1930, at the beginning of President Getúlio Vargas' administration, the conflict between labor and capital was reconfigured through the consolidation of a corporatist structure of representation. As for the corporatist model that took root in Brazil, it was through the regulating action of the State that it became possible to organize representative associations of capital and labor to which the right to represent work and economic interests had been conceded, as a means of managing conflict<sup>12</sup>. This said, it is our intent to highlight here the formation and consolidation of this corporatist system as a central element of identity and within the operating logic of the workers and union movements in Brazil. This is significant because the corporate unionism that was formed under the auspices of President Getúlio Vargas' authoritarianism survived the process of democratic liberalization that took place between 1946 and 1964, the return of authoritarianism under the civil-military regime that spanned 1964 to 1985, and has resisted the many criticisms that have been directed toward it since redemocratization<sup>13</sup>.

Since the first few days that followed the Coup of 1930, the workers' movement was repressed with extreme violence and the Ministry of Labor, Industry and Commerce was created. The following year, with the promulgation of the Trade Union Law, the first guidelines for the country's labor legislation appeared. This law transformed the institutional framework of the capital-wage labor relationships that had been hitherto established. Based on the corporatist principle of unicity, which drastically reduced the number of unions and thereby, the competition between them, the law determined that unions would function as consultative and collaborative organs of the State. It prohibited unions from propagating any type of sectarian ideology, whether social, political or religious in nature. Furthermore, it made workers' membership within official unions compulsory, at least in practice, by making

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<sup>11</sup> Costa, Emília, "A nova face do movimento operário na Primeira República", *Revista Brasileira de História*, São Paulo, 2, 1982, 217-232.

<sup>12</sup> Leopoldi, Maria A., *Industrial associations and politics in contemporary Brazil. The Association of Industrialists, Economic Policy Making and the State (1930-1961)*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Oxford, 1984.

<sup>13</sup> Rodrigues, Leôncio, *Partidos e sindicatos: escritos de sociologia política*, Centro Edelstein de Pesquisas Sociais, Rio de Janeiro, 2009, 8.



the benefits of social legislation contingent upon the former<sup>14</sup>. In truth, by thus binding unions to the Ministry of Labor, Industry and Commerce, the government explicitly violated civil rights, suffocating any form of manifestation contrary to the new order.

In the midst of escalating authoritarianism, culminating in the Coup of 1937, corporatism triumphed<sup>15</sup>. The process of dismembering the independent union movement was supported by the entrepreneurial class, a fact which guaranteed the definitive, albeit conflict-ridden adherence of the latter to the corporatist project<sup>16</sup>.

Regarding this corporate model, it is imperative to emphasize that it favored the entrepreneurial class inordinately, not only constituting new associations that ran parallel to those belonging to the official corporatist structure (particularly as of the decade of the 1950s) but also keeping up a network of associations that had emerged spontaneously during the first two decades of the 20th century. Furthermore, the industrial entrepreneurial class had privileged access, as of the Vargas Era, to institutional arenas (such as the economic councils that were in vigor as of the first Vargas administration and governmental banks executive groups that were put into place during the Juscelino Kubitschek administration between 1956 and 1960) through which it made certain its demands were heard at the higher echelons of State bureaucracy<sup>17</sup>.

The working class, in turn, was deprived of its earlier forms of union organization, those pertaining to the period before the corporatist tutelage of the State had been established. Its access to decision-making arena was also severely restricted; workers' participation, under the control of the Ministry of Labor, became circumscribed to labor and social security policy. With the instauration of the military dictatorship in 1964, workers were totally excluded from the decision-making arenas within which they had enjoyed previous, albeit partial, participation<sup>18</sup>.

Despite the issues we have discussed above, Brazilian corporatism cannot be reduced exclusively to the status of instrument for the violation of the civil rights of the working classes. It is a system that has a profoundly ambiguous character, favoring

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<sup>14</sup> Gomes, Ângela, *A invenção do trabalhismo*, 175-180.

<sup>15</sup> Santos, Wanderley, *Razões da desordem*, Rocco, Rio de Janeiro, 1993, 64.

<sup>16</sup> Skidmore, Thomas, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964. An Experiment in Democracy*, Oxford Univ. Press, New York, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Diniz, Eli and Boschi, Renato, *Empresário, interesses e mercado: dilemas do desenvolvimento no Brasil*, Editora UFMG, Belo Horizonte, 2004, 48-49.

<sup>18</sup> Santos, Wanderley, *Razões da desordem*, 64-66.

different correlations of forces according to the conjuncture. For example, during the period spanning 1953 to 1964, corporatism made it possible for large scale mobilizations around class-based demands such as raising the minimum wage and the formulation of a new Social Security Law to come into being. Both demands were supported by the government. This dove-tailing of worker and government interests was clearly established through the movement for structural reforms (whose major concern was the social inequality frequently emphasized in the class-oriented discourse of communist and labor leadership of the union movement) when corporate unionism worked as an instrument for mobilizing workers in support of President João Goulart's (1961-1964) political agenda.

That said, we may be able to assert that corporatism and the class-based political agenda are elements that characterize the structure of the worker's and trade union movement in Brazil. With regard to corporatism, its conjunctural plasticity, as well as the economic and political interests emerging around it, has contributed to its long-term continuity. Might it be possible to suppose that the consolidation and persistence of Brazilian style corporatism have enhanced the historical tendencies of an unionism almost exclusively class-oriented? In creating persistent channels for the use of violence as a form of silencing, this system has made the democratic expansion of class conflict and the negotiation of satisfactory solutions very difficult. Holding back redistributive conflict in this manner may very well be a factor that helps to explain the rarely questioned hegemony of class-based issues in the secular history of the Brazilian trade union movement. Similarly, by fencing in redistributive class conflict, the system contributes all the more to repressing the expansion of contestation to other forms of inequality, such as those linked to sex and race.

As of the mid-1970s, with the defeat of the party that supported the civil-military dictatorship initiated in 1964, a group that is significant, although a minority within the Brazilian trade union movement, put forth a very vehement critique of the corporatist system of representation. Within Brazilian historiography, this movement has been denominated 'the New Trade Unionism', and it was there that a new movement agenda began to take shape.

### **'New Trade Unionism' and the formation of an agenda in defense of disadvantaged groups and diversity**

From the middle of the decade of the 1970s, there was an outburst of strikes in a group of cities that together make up the largest industrial pole in Brazil, located within the state of São Paulo. Begun by steelworkers, the latter were soon joined by other categories of workers who as an ensemble went on to redefine the Brazilian trade union movement, contesting the 'old structures' of corporate unionism along the way.

In addition to fighting the long process of decline in wages that had been promoted by the dictatorial regime, these strikes raised the issue of the need for trade union autonomy in relation to political parties and the State, and for change in the modes of relationship between union leadership and rank and file, so that the former would truly attend to the interests of the latter. They demanded that the working class be represented by peers rather than by an intellectual vanguard. This was considered important in order to make sure that the trade union movement did not deviate from the immediate interests of the workers it was supposed to represent<sup>19</sup>.

Despite the increased repression of strikers, the current of trade unionists led by Luiz Inácio da Silva founded the Workers' Party, in 1980, and shortly thereafter, a trade union federation. The trade unionists that founded the party and the federation, referred to as "*autênticos*" (the authentic ones) sought to build a 'new trade unionism' in opposition to what they understood the trade unionism of the period prior to the 1964 military coup to have represented.

The 'new trade unionists', in spite of a discourse of change that focused, above all, on the critique of the structure of official trade unions, recycled a series of practices that had been consolidated by the predecessors they criticized. For example, the new movement never broke with the notion of unicity (one union only) maintained by those who came before them<sup>20</sup>

Nonetheless, the cooling down of the more radical critique of the new trade unionism and ensuing accommodation to the old corporatist structure does not annul the fact that this movement also brought significant changes to the political and labor

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<sup>19</sup> Santana, Marco, "O novo e o velho sindicalismo: análise de um debate", *Revista de Sociologia e Política*, Curitiba, 10, 1998, 19-35.

<sup>20</sup> Mattos, Marcelo, "Novos e velhos sindicalismos no Rio de Janeiro (1955-1988)", Tese de Doutorado, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 1996.

movement scenario in Brazil. The new unionism was at the helm of processes that opened up the public sphere to forms of contesting the power structure and made way for the strengthening of a myriad of social movements that were beginning to emerge. It is no coincidence that both union structures and the Workers' Party brought into their agendas, albeit shrouded in conflict, a significant number of the demands emanating from the new social movements (women's movement, Black movement and LGBT movement) we have been speaking about. The assimilation of demands coming from movements for diversity began at this time. There was greater progress on women's issues, a fact that can be explained by the significant presence of women in the strikes of the 1970s<sup>21</sup>.

Within that context, concerns with sexual difference, as raised by the feminist movement, were seen with distrust within the trade union milieu. They were understood as issues that undermined the challenge of strengthening 'working class unity' and 'the unification of struggles'. Thus, initially, the predominance of a class vision worked as a barrier to the expansion of the agenda to valorize diversity amongst workers. Nonetheless, and albeit from the margins, feminist demands advanced in the wake of the 'new unionism'. In 1986, for example, within the ambit of the Unified Workers' Federation, the National Commission of the Working Woman was created. Also within the Unified Workers' Federation, in 1993, a policy of quotas was approved, by virtue of which 30% of all leadership positions should be destined to women. The same policy was approved within the Workers' Party. Throughout the decade of the 1990s and 2000s, all the major trade union federations that had been founded in the 1980s created national women's secretariats and campaigns to discuss forms of inequality that went beyond the class debate. The number of congresses and forums debating women issues also increased, as well as the number of clauses referring to this topic within collective labor contracts<sup>22</sup>.

There was also a certain convergence of the Black movement, at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, and the agenda of the Worker's Party (and consequently, of the trade union movement it was linked to). Many members of the Unified Black Movement, which emerged at the end of the 1970s, were also members

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<sup>21</sup> Soares, José, "As políticas de gênero no sindicalismo brasileiro contemporâneo", Annual meeting of National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Social Sciences (ANPOCS), 2016, 2-3.

<sup>22</sup> Bertolin, Patrícia and Kamada, Fabiana, "Ausentes ou Invisíveis? A participação das mulheres nos sindicatos", *Caderno Espaço Feminino*, Uberlândia, 25, 2012, 28-52.

of the Workers' Party<sup>23</sup>. However, this meeting ground did not emerge with the same strength and intensity as it had in relation to the feminist movement. The encounter between the trade union movement and the LGBT agenda was even more fragile. The debate on LGBT rights within the trade union milieu is recent and superficial.

In the following sections, we will examine how these issues have taken hold within a specific union milieu, the unions that represent federal public university faculty.

### **The inclusion of the debate on disadvantaged groups and diversity within the federal public university faculty unions' agenda**

As observed in the previous section, trade unionism in Brazil, as of the 1970s, underwent numerous changes in its organizational and ideological nature. It was from within these changes that the issues related to disadvantaged groups (women, Black people and the LGBT population, but also persons with disabilities, indigenous populations, etc.) became a part of the agenda of the unions that represented the faculty of federal public universities, as of the 1980s.

The data that is available demonstrates that this inclusion occurred gradually and its institutionalization was extremely slow, acquiring some density only in very recent years. This is not to say that the discussions that are its core had not been underway for some time. Rather, it was the creation of a place for these discussions within the organizational structure of professional organizations and unions that progressed very slowly. It took time for these issues to gain maturity and acceptance as an object worthy of real attention<sup>24</sup>.

One factor that contributed to this was the process of renewal of union leadership within this milieu. As of 2010, longtime leadership of many of these unions began to be replaced with much younger faculty members. Many of these new professors had received their political education at a time in which the defense of disadvantaged groups and the value of diversity had been put firmly into place as a necessary element of the type of social transformation that was envisioned for Brazil and the type of struggle that the unions sought to become a part of. Put in other words, these were union activists who saw the class struggle as a process that could not be

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<sup>23</sup> Pereira, Amílcar, "O Mundo Negro: a construção do movimento negro contemporâneo no Brasil (1970-1995)", Tese de Doutorado, Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2010, 25.

<sup>24</sup> ANDES, "Cartilha de combate ao racismo", 2019. [bit.ly/2TJMIW](https://bit.ly/2TJMIW) (Consulted on 12/12/2019).

separated from struggles for racial and gender equality and LGBT rights<sup>25</sup>.

Another factor to be considered was the production of researches demonstrating that the problems encountered by faculty were not solely around capital-wage labor conflict or the (usually not very democratic) management models of university life. Rather, such researches provided evidence of a large and tough complexity of daily life within institutions of higher education, marked for example by different forms of harassment and demands for scientific production that were incompatible with working conditions, etc. All of this, according to these researches, was contributing to the increased psychological and physical suffering of university faculty, culminating, in several cases, with episodes of suicide<sup>26</sup>.

Another factor to which attention should be drawn regarding the inclusion of diversity on these unions' agenda was the modernization of reflections on inequality in Brazilian society. Such reflections, without diminishing the importance attributed to class struggle, began to incorporate new concepts and a new approach to understanding poverty and multiple forms of suffering in our society. In doing so, they produced the vigorous incorporation of the issue of the discrimination that disadvantaged groups face. At the same time, this represented a new advocacy for public policies in favor of disadvantaged groups, meant to protect them from discrimination and place value on their social legacy. This tendency became particularly evident with regard to the 'racial issue'<sup>27</sup>.

For decades after the 1888 abolition of slavery, the notion that there was a Brazilian 'racial democracy' in which Black and white people lived in harmony was upheld. This is not to say that such arguments denied the social differences conditioning the lives of each group; the latter were attributed to the legacy of the slave system of the past, rather than understood as a powerful material and symbolic structure impeding the progress of Afro-Brazilians. Thus, it was argued that the process of overcoming the inequality expressed through a range of social indicators (illiteracy rates, years of schooling, average life expectancy, wage levels etc.) would be

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<sup>25</sup> ANDES, "Cartilha do GTPCEGDS: Em defesa dos direitos das mulheres, dos indígenas, das/os negras/os, e das/os LGBT", 2016. [bit.ly/39yEOde](http://bit.ly/39yEOde) (Consulted on 13/12/2019).

<sup>26</sup> Gasparini, Sandra; Barreto, Sandhi and Assunção, Ada, "O professor, as condições de trabalho e os efeitos sobre sua saúde", *Educação & Pesquisa*, Belo Horizonte, 31, 2005, 189-199. Lima, Fátima and Lima-Filho, Dario, "Condições de trabalho e saúde do/a professor/a universitário/a", *Ciências & Cognição*, 14, 2009, 62-82.

<sup>27</sup> Jaccoud, Luciana, "Racismo e república: o debate sobre o branqueamento e a discriminação racial no Brasil", In Theodoro, Mário (org.), *As políticas públicas e a desigualdade racial no Brasil: 120 anos após a abolição*, IPEA, Brasília, 2008.

spontaneously resolved, over the years, as the subsequent generations of Black people were born further and further from the slave system past. At the same time, a wager was placed on the strength of miscegenation that, by 'whitening' the Black population, would make it more healthy and able to take advantage of the opportunities for social mobility that Brazilian society supposedly provided. These arguments and the policies deriving from them were disputed on at least two fronts. One of them was academic: studies demonstrated that the differences between Blacks and whites had remained stable over the course of the decades, without showing any signs of change. Another front were the actions carried out by the Black movement that reemerged at the end of the 1970s, denouncing the so-called 'myth of racial democracy', the persistence of generalized class-based discrimination and government ineptness in dealing with the problem<sup>28</sup>.

These studies, complaints and corresponding demands were for a long time received with contempt by public authorities and organized civil society. Nonetheless, as of the decade of the 2000s, with the Workers' Party rise to the helm of the federal government, a new window of opportunities<sup>29</sup> was opened, allowing these issues to be dealt with more adequately within the governmental sphere. This became possible through the recognition of the notion of 'racial democracy' as a fallacy, and the notion that there was a historical debt to be paid to the Black population of the country. Dealing with the later meant generating public policies capable of confronting racism and its noxious consequences and placing value on the Afro-Brazilian cultural legacy, recognizing it as a fundamental component of 'Brazilianness'. For these purposes, the federal government created the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Policies for Racial Equality, awarded the status of ministry. Many states and municipalities also created similar institutional structures<sup>30</sup>.

Faculty associations and unions were diversely affected by this phenomenon and not all of them were able to immediately deal with the demand for the defense of social disadvantaged group rights and the value of diversity that was now gaining clearer definition. In reference to this issue, one of our interviewees asserted:

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<sup>28</sup> Telles, Edward, *Racismo à brasileira: uma nova perspectiva sociológica*, Relume-Dumará, Fundação Ford, Rio de Janeiro, 2003.

<sup>29</sup> Kingdon, John, *Agendas, alternatives and public policies*, Univ. of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2003.

<sup>30</sup> Lima, Márcia, "Desigualdades raciais e políticas públicas: ações afirmativas no governo Lula", *Novos estudos – CEBRAP*, São Paulo, 87, 2010, 81-83.

*"I believe that the union ran off course, got sort of lost. Now they have found their way. There is discussion [on the value of diversity] that has been going on since previous governments, but the theme really progressed as of 2012, [when it gained] greater recognition. And unions really did not know how to deal with the issue."<sup>31</sup>*

Speech such as this, corroborated by other testimonies, suggests that in some cases, unions lost their potential as protagonists in this discussion to other social actors (student collectives, for example) linked to university life. Thus, if on the one hand it is true that the theme of respect for diversity was no stranger to the world of faculty associations and unions, on the other hand, and to a varying extent between them, it remains secondary position<sup>32</sup>. Even in the nationwide union entities, we see that the institutionalization of the discussion does not come easily.

On the one hand, the incorporation of the issues of disadvantaged groups and diversity on union and association agendas is a reality, with ongoing discussions and the creation of spaces of reflection and permanent working groups. As one interviewee highlighted:

*"This year was decisive. I had never heard professors speaking so naturally about transvestites and quilombolas. This was the kind of thing you never saw before. And the GT [working group] got this started and it was accepted. I think it was a question that just had to be put out there in order to be accepted."<sup>33</sup>*

On the other hand, we see that there is a vast terrain to be covered before the issues at stake moved from the margins to someplace closer to the center of the union agenda and became more consolidated.

This raises a question that is relevant to policy making processes and, more specifically, to the ways in which particular issues are brought onto an institutional agenda. Rarely do new issues immediately occupy permanent or high status positions. Many themes, in particular those that we could refer to as 'moral issues' (the right to abortion, same-sex marriage, stem cell research, etc.) are subject to frequent

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<sup>31</sup> Member of ADUFF (UFF) / ANDES, João Góis, Niterói-RJ, 24/11/2017.

<sup>32</sup> In fact, discussions on diversity flourish more vigorously within union federations and are more incipient within the unions themselves. This situation has not gone unnoticed by some of our interviewees who report having made considerable effort to get more union members - from the rank and file - involved in these debates.

<sup>33</sup> Member of ADUFRJ (UFRJ) / ANDES, Francisco Duarte, Rio de Janeiro, 02/03/2018.



questioning regarding their legitimacy, public relevance, worthiness in terms of financial investment, ethical convenience or even their moral probity. Even when this does not happen, the process of incorporating new issues within a political agenda means confronting hierarchies in which established issues are not easily dislocated to allow space for those that have only recently appeared<sup>34</sup>. The inclusion of issues regarding 'disadvantaged groups' and 'valorization of diversity' on the union agenda seems to involve this type of problem. An example of this was cited in our research, in a situation in which certain union members decided, in the words of one woman who was interviewed, "*to kick the door open so that the discussion could begin*"<sup>35</sup>.

In the following section we will discuss some of the obstacles that have gotten in the way of the advancement of the debate on disadvantaged groups and the valorization of diversity within the organizations that concern us here.

### **Obstacles in the debate on disadvantaged groups and the value of diversity**

A first obstacle worth noting is the conflict that emerges between different conceptions of the function of higher education faculty unions. Following the tradition that precedes the decade of the 1970s and never stopped exerting strong influence, the discourse of a number of union leaders continues to assert the superiority of class struggle over all other forms of conflict and encourages trade unions to concentrate efforts on the capital-wage labor antagonism. At the same time, this perspective argues that the union agenda be exclusively informed by issues that are related to the objective conditions of university teaching, such as career plans, expense benefits, wage increases and improvement in conditions for teaching and research. As a result, other issues are given a secondary role or even seen as not deserving a real place on the faculty associations and unions' agenda. Racism, misogyny and homophobia are examples of such 'secondary matters'. This has proven a source of conflict among activists of different generations and an obstacle in the expansion of debates on respect and the valorization of diversity within the faculty associations and unions' milieu.

Another obstacle that has a major impact on the degree of institutionalization

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<sup>34</sup> Góis, João, "Policy analysis in non-governmental organisations...", 188.

<sup>35</sup> Member of ADUFG (UFG) / PROIFES, João Góis, Salvador-BA, 13/09/2018.

of new issues and contributes to their current secondary position on the union agenda is the fact that incorporation continues to be largely dependent on the protagonism of individuals who are linked to groups that are more socially vulnerable, whether because they are members of such groups or because they have created some degree of empathy for the hardship that members of these groups endure. Thus, rather than treating these issues as questions that have an impact on everyone's lives (leadership and rank and file), they continue to be seen as relevant only to the interests of a small group of people. This is connected to another matter: the high turnover of members of working groups that have been put together to deal with these new subjects. One of our interviews reported how, during the transition from the 2016 to the 2017 season, with only two exceptions, all the other members of the working group in his association left it. This had a negative impact on the realization of programmed activities.

The racial-ethnic and gender composition of faculty is another of the underlying problems that contributes to the difficulties that the debate on diversity within universities has in moving up closer to the center of the union agenda. A recent study shows that even in the federal universities located in parts of the country where the population is largely Black, the number of male and female faculty who are Black is residual<sup>36</sup>. The results of this diagnosis may very well be applicable to the entirety of institutions of higher learning in the country. Put succinctly, the faculty at Brazilian universities is largely white and male.

Of course it is true that women are represented on university faculty, as the study we have alluded to above makes clear. Nonetheless, their presence, in order to be better understood, must be explained in light of at least two pieces of evidence. The first is that we are speaking largely of white women. The second is that they tend to be concentrated in areas that: 1) have lower social status (education, social work, etc.) and/or 2) are associated with care work (nursing, nutrition, certain medical specializations, physical therapy, etc.).

To this can be added the fact that heteronormativity prevails within university milieu. This is obviously not meant to deny the presence of gay, lesbian and bisexual

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<sup>36</sup> Brito, Angela, "Professoras Negras na Universidade Federal da Bahia-UFBA: cor, status e desempenho", Seminário Internacional Fazendo Gênero 11 & 13th Women's Worlds Congress, 2017, [bit.ly/3cEhoor](https://bit.ly/3cEhoor) (Consulted on 22/12/2019).

faculty members. Yet the latter are often subjected to the 'rules of the closet', which silence their erotic and sexual experiences and affect their work routines. Some of them may openly assume their sexual orientation and thereby help to spread the debate on lesbianism, transgender, homosexuality, etc. but are most often subjected to implicit sanctions such as those that flow from derogatory comments on their topics of teaching and research. At this point, we still have little to convey on transexual, transgender or transvestite faculty, given their scarce numbers.

In a context in which white, middle class, heterosexual and cis-gender men predominate, it is not surprising that a conservative voice prevails and that some unions have been so reticent in offering support for: 1) implanting a quota policy for Blacks and students who are members of the popular classes and 2) the de-criminalization of abortion and the institutionalization of measures that favor women's free choice to interrupt or continue a pregnancy. This is a stance that, in turn, reflects the position that union rank and file (largely men living heteronormatively) hold. A comment made by a woman we interviewed regarding how the union she belongs to dealt with issues of affirmative action for the Black population is illustrative: *"The discussion that was taken to our congress on quotas barely escaped rejection, because a lot of members, a very large part, were against them. It is shameful to see that our union came so close to rejecting them"*<sup>37</sup>. Another woman we interviewed pointed out that, in addition to the union leadership, the rank and file (particularly those linked to the bench sciences) must also be convinced on issues related to diversity and respect for disadvantage group. In her words:

*"The fact that we have to convince our union that a [working] group on human rights, a [working] group on Black people is important is a reality. The rank and file that supports the union is mostly concerned with career and legal issues. Professors, for the most part, in daily life do not see the union as a transformative element of society. They don't want that responsibility nor that role, especially if they are not from areas linked to these matters, that is, to human and social sciences."*<sup>38</sup>

The obstacles that stand in the way of discussion and implementation of actions in support of disadvantaged groups and for the valorization of diversity do not affect

<sup>37</sup> Member of ASPUV (UFV) / ANDES, Sidmara de Souza, Viçosa-MG, 06/04/2018.

<sup>38</sup> Member of ANDES, Francisco Duarte, Rio de Janeiro, 29/11/2019.

all vulnerable groups equally. The rhetoric of human rights that was consolidated in Brazil throughout the decades of the 1990s and 2000s included growing numbers of vulnerable groups. Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that this happened within the context of a clear hierarchy of groups. The reasons for this are multiple and a more detailed discussion of the matter goes beyond the scope of this paper. However, it seems clear to us that 'women' are at the top of the pyramid, LGBT populations at the base and Black people in the middle. The practical implications that this has are varied, affecting, for example, the volume of resources allocated to each group and the number and types of organizations devoted to strengthening their rights<sup>39</sup>. This scenario seems to reproduce itself within the sphere of university unions. Although harsh limitations may yet be observed within them regarding the defense of women's rights, it is a much-debated issue for which protective measures have been taken. Yet the same cannot be said in relation to the LGBT segment, which remains in limbo, a situation which is relieved on very few occasions, and when it does, tends to be due to action of a very few committed individuals. A union leader from a major university in the state of Rio de Janeiro responded to our queries with the argument that discussions about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in his union are very recent, beginning only after reflections on other disadvantaged groups had already gained ground:

*"I never saw any mention of this type of initiative, not in the records of what has been done thus far. I want you to take into consideration that I haven't been in this position for very long, but I have never witnessed any kind of initiative to take up this type of discussion"*<sup>40</sup>.

This silence becomes all the more surprising when we realize that we are dealing with a large public institution with a visible LGBT population.

On the same topic, a representative of one of the associations asserted the following:

*"The women of the Proifes had proposed the issue of a network of women, but I am not sure what is going on with that right now. The woman question is in this sense more advanced. The question of Blacks, sexual diversity, gays are not discussed as much, and of transgender, even less so, even because of their*

<sup>39</sup> Góis, João, "Policy analysis in non-governmental organisations...", 189.

<sup>40</sup> Member of ADUR-RJ (UFRRJ) / ANDES, João Góis, Rio de Janeiro, 17/01/2018.

[low] representativity."<sup>41</sup>

Pierre Bourdieu argues that all fields establish their particular rules, rules whose constant reproduction turns them into taken-for-granted realities for the individuals who move within them<sup>42</sup>. This process of naturalization forcefully turns hierarchies, power relations and diverse forms of subordination into common and unquestioned facts. It is this that Bourdieu refers to with his concept of *doxa*. One of the *doxas* that is present in the field of university faculty unions that potentializes barriers to the defense of disadvantaged groups and the valorization of diversity is the predominantly male presence within them. This comment made by a male member of one of the associations is telling: "We don't even realize we are having a discussion only amongst men, a roundtable with only men, an executive board made up only of men until a female colleague reminds us of that!"<sup>43</sup>. We would have to agree with him that this is not a problem exclusive to faculty unions. In reality, all evidence indicates that the university field reflects the broader patterns of social life where this *doxa* also prevails. This perception is consonant with another assertion made by the above-mentioned interviewee who added: "The same stereotypes held by people who work in the university, in university administration, are reproduced within faculty unions"<sup>44</sup>.

Within the ANDES, the largest university faculty association in the country, from its creation in 1981 until early 2018, there were only five women who served as presidents. This is a very small number if we take into account that women make up more than 50% of all faculty in Brazilian universities. Even at a smaller scale, such as divisions of the union, female presence in the makeup of executive committees tends to be disproportional to their presence within the institution. In one of these institutions, in the state of Paraná, women are present within the directorate but occupy 'hands on' positions rather than executive ones. This means that they participate in getting things done but not in coordinating or defining the way work is to be done. To a large extent, then, faculty unions reproduce the dynamics of the Brazilian occupational structure as a whole. It is a structure within which women's work is indispensable, yet women are kept in subaltern positions and out of positions of command and authority. This sustains their disadvantages in relation to men insofar as possibilities to move up

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<sup>41</sup> Member of Proifes, João Góis, Rio de Janeiro, 09/12/2018.

<sup>42</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre, *Language and symbolic power*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1999.

<sup>43</sup> Member of APUB (UFBA) / ANDES, João Góis, Salvador-BA. 15/09/2018.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

the career and wage ladder are concerned. When the variable of race is added, the situation becomes even more serious, since Black women rarely move to executive positions and earn less than white men and women for the same type of activity and length of workday<sup>45</sup>.

In spite of this (of the historical factors that have persisted in limiting women's executive positions within organizations in general and within unions in particular until today) women have made it into executive groups such as boards of directors. Nonetheless, this participation, according to the testimonies we have collected, has tended to occur via the incorporation and reproduction of masculine logics of command and through postures that are considered typically male, and in many circumstances even acting in sexist manners. Commenting on this issue, one woman we interviewed mentioned that the first woman to ever finish undergraduate studies in Engineering in Brazil, in 1945, was a Black woman who took on a masculine style (in the clothing she wore, for example), in order to be able to deal with the manual workers who were her subordinates. In order to resist sexism, she created a 'cross-dressed body' that made it possible for her to navigate an arid and male-dominated environment. It is possible to think about the 'machismo' of female trade unionists from this point of view. The identification of this tendency has obliged female and feminist trade unionists to develop a discourse that emphasizes the compatibility of political activism, executive or leadership positions, living in an environment that is male dominated and maintaining femininity. One female interviewee approached this issue as follows: "*Women can polish their nails and be feminine, because [they have] content, because [they were] elected, etc.*"<sup>46</sup>. It is worth mentioning here that some discourses on how women have been able to overcome obstacles in moving into union leadership positions seems to reproduce strong gender stereotypes, the classic rigid separation of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. What would distinguish masculine and feminine forms of leadership? Do women possess an innate or even learned way of directing organizations that is present in all of them? Doesn't even the counter-discourse presented above contain within it a stereotyped notion (using nail polish, for example) of how to distinguish male and female modes of acting within unions?

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<sup>45</sup> Rosa, Waldemir, "Sexo e cor: categorias de controle social e reprodução das desigualdades socioeconômicas no Brasil", *Rev. Estud. Fem.* 17, no. 3, 2009, 889-899. Aquilini, Guiomar, "O trabalho não remunerado e as mulheres", *Gênero*, Niterói, 16, 2016, 149-171.

<sup>46</sup> Member of ADUFVJM (UFVJM) / ANDES, Sidmara de Souza, Diamantina-MG, 10/06/2018.

One last comment on the underrepresentation of women in faculty unions: future research should look into other factors beyond those that we have mentioned here that contribute to the persistence of the problem. Questions linked to the double shift, for example, should be considered, since desires and possibilities for participation in union life may be hampered by the accumulation not only of professional but of domestic responsibilities (housework, caring for elderly relatives, helping children with homework, etc.) that have been historically defined as women's work. Without a doubt, and as some recent studies have shown, men have increased the amount of time they spend on domestic labor in Brazil. However, this has been a slow and gradual change and we are still quite far away from a more equal distribution in the time women and men spend on household chores<sup>47</sup>. Thus, further study may help us to understand the comment made by a woman we interviewed when she reported that “women are often invited to participate, yet they don't”<sup>48</sup>. Addressing the same issue, a male union activist stated:

*“There are women who would like to take part, but there are the daily life issues as well. A woman is a mother. Even a university professor, she's [still] a housewife, she really does have other responsibilities. (...). Existing conditions make it much harder for women to take part in Proifes and in trade unions in general”<sup>49</sup>.*

During our research, the underrepresentation of Black men and women in union leadership and national associations was also highlighted<sup>50</sup>. There are two factors that emerge as responsible for this situation. The first dovetails with studies that point to the underrepresentation of Black men and women in undergraduate and graduate programs and among university faculty<sup>51</sup>. In other words, underrepresentation reflects the greater difficulties that Black male and female students encounter in order to get into and complete undergraduate programs, which in turn has an impact on their possibilities to get through a doctoral program and, in the future, get a faculty position at a university<sup>52</sup>. The second explanation makes direct reference to racist practices that inhibit the union participation of members of this group. Practices such as these

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<sup>47</sup> Rosa, Waldemir, “Sexo e cor: categorias de controle social...”.

<sup>48</sup> Member of Proifes, João Góis, Rio de Janeiro, 07/12/2018.

<sup>49</sup> Member of ADUR-RJ (UFRRJ), João Pinheiro, Rio de Janeiro, 08/02/2018.

<sup>50</sup> The only exception was the union that represents the faculty from Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA).

<sup>51</sup> Pinto, Giselle, “Desigualdades de participação na pós-graduação da UFF: aliando raça e gênero”, *Gênero*, 8, 2007, 121-142.

<sup>52</sup> Rosa, Waldemir, “Sexo e cor: categorias de controle social...”.

can manifest themselves in two ways. The first is objective and direct and occurs through open opposition to Black participation. In our research, none of interviewees reported facing or encountering situations of this type. The second, and most common, acts insidiously and materializes through what the literature has referred to as “racism Brazilian style”<sup>53</sup>. This refers to prejudiced discourse that is camouflaged through jokes and poking fun, but which in fact are essentially humiliating and discourage people from getting into and remaining within a particular social milieu. This ‘Brazilian style racism’, insofar as it does not express racism in its most objectifying form, becomes harder to fight. Added on to this is what has been referred to as “institutional racism”<sup>54</sup> that is constituted by the creation of barriers (greater difficulty in access to resources; constant questioning of the need to discuss racism; brushing off grievances regarding racist practices and behaviors, treating them as playfulness and joking and those that denounce them as ‘over-reacting’, etc.).

Among the unions our research covered, we were able to observe that in almost all of them, the presence of people who openly belong to the LGBT segment is seen as positive. At the same time, and although there is no consensus on this point, the majority of our interviewees tend to qualify LGBT participation as more difficult than that of women and Black people. They are confronted with greater and more explicit manifestations of prejudice within union environments. On this issue it becomes important to distinguish between the conduct of union leadership and rank and file. More than one of our interviewees reported observing greater care on the part of the former with regard to homophobic practices, possibly attributable to the fact that they are more exposed to educational campaigns geared toward fighting this problem. Thus, homophobia is manifested more (yet not solely) among the rank and file. In the case of a union in the state of Paraná, for example, a woman we interviewed commented that, “Leadership is respectful, but among the rank and file, sexist, racist and homophobic jokes are still common”<sup>55</sup>.

The situation becomes ever more complex because there are no existing measures nor plans to create measures to eliminate prejudiced practices related to this segment of the population, as there already are for women. This may be seen as

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<sup>53</sup> Telles, Edward, *Racismo à brasileira: uma nova perspectiva sociológica*.

<sup>54</sup> Kalckman, Suzana et al, “Racismo institucional: um desafio para a equidade no SUS?”, *Saúde e Sociedade*, São Paulo, 16, 2007, 146-155.

<sup>55</sup> Member of Sindiedutec (IFPR) / PROIFES, Sidmara de Souza, Rio de Janeiro, 04/11/2018.



part of a peculiar process of belonging in which physical presence (that of people, in this case) is not equivalent to the (low) degree of relevance that is attributed to their needs. They are present, but, as a woman we interviewed claimed, are also 'invisible'.

### **Where Disadvantaged Groups and Diversity are Actually Currently Placed in the Unions' Agenda?**

As we have alluded to in another part of this paper, the issues we discuss here gradually made their way onto the agenda of faculty unions, confronting a series of obstacles along the way. Analysis of this issue in the light of available data enabled us to identify a variety of perceptions on the place that these issues hold on today's union agenda. Differences can be attributed to the degree of consolidation of the various unions and faculty associations we study, the state they are located in, as well as other idiosyncratic factors. Yet our interpretation of these problems points to two particular patterns.

In the first place, disadvantaged groups and the valorizing of diversity remain in a sort of institutional ghetto from which they escape from only in rare situations. One such situation is when thematic events are held, activities that favor the expansion of discussion and debate. Yet such activities are often self-enclosed, take on a celebratory character and have an audience made up of people already mobilized around the issues they raise. In this case, they do little more than 'preach to believers' and may also enable union leadership to express a 'false' rather than genuine interest in these issues, not promoting effective actions to reduce inequities linked to sex, sexual identity, gender identity or race/color within unions or within universities as a whole.

The second situation refers to the possibility that the issues at stake here may be effectively migrating to the center of the union agenda and gaining a higher status within the hierarchy of union issues. In these cases, the questions we are talking about here, in addition to achieving, may also be considered in terms of their intersection with other important issues. Although this may be a recent advancement, as highlighted in the comment of a renown female union leader when she said that "*until only very recently no one even talked about female faculty's need for day care centers*"<sup>56</sup>, discussions on diversity now unfold at a higher level of maturity. From the

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<sup>56</sup> Member of ADUFRJ (UFRJ) / ANDES, Francisco Duarte, Rio de Janeiro, 02/03/2018.

research we present here and notwithstanding the limitations of the data we have been able to put together thus far, we propose the hypothesis that advancement has occurred within the local union divisions that have been most subject to renewal and are linked to universities which, have been able to implant affirmative action in different arenas, beyond that of the unions. In other words, universities that have incorporated rights, such as that of transgender people to use the name of their choice and quotas for Black students in Master's and Doctoral programs. In these cases, local unions and associations commonly produce a discourse that reiterates the dissemination of knowledge on these issues and reasserts their importance for rank and file. This is managed through events of different types such as talks and seminars, but also through more solidified conscious-raising campaigns and through legal and administrative measures when cases of discrimination come up within their area of jurisdiction.

The position that unions take on the issues we are discussing here must also be pondered through consideration of the absence of systematic pressures coming from diverse identity movements. If such pressures were applied in a more generalized or regular way, they might translate into lessened resistance within leadership and rank and file and, furthermore, garner wider support on the negotiation table. This issue is worthy of intensified examination, for the following reason: debate on the labor market is relatively recent within the LGBT movement<sup>57</sup>, whereas within the Black and Feminist Movements it has been a central theme since their resurgence in the transition from the 1970s to 1980s. Given the intimate relations that these last two movements have with the academic environment, it is worth asking why they have not directed their demands toward the union environment that we study here.

Although we may be able to assert that issues of disadvantaged groups and the value of diversity are present in different places within a spectrum of importance, the strongest tendency is the one that keeps them at the margins. The clearest indicator in this regard has less relation to events held or to effective or supposed support given by directorship or rank and file to these questions, but to the place that these questions occupy within negotiations with federal government and administration of federal institutions of higher learning. More than any other indicator,

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<sup>57</sup> Garcia, Agnaldo and Souza, Eloisio M. de, "Sexualidade e trabalho: estudo sobre a discriminação de homossexuais masculinos no setor bancário", *RAP* 44, no. 6, 2010, 1353-77.

from a strictly pragmatic point of view, this is the crucial moment that defines the hierarchy of what is in effect considered most important for union leadership and rank and file. Within the interviews we carried out and documents we examined, we did not find any evidence of relevance being attributed to the issues at stake here at this level.

### **Final Considerations**

Given the large number of unions and unionists within the Brazilian federal university system, the study that we have carried should be considered merely exploratory. For this reason, its conclusions should be taken as initial, pointing to the need to carry out studies that are wider in scope as well as research that looks more deeply into relevant cases. Both types of study should promote a focus on one fundamental aspect that has the potential to shed considerable light on the dynamics of university faculty unionism in the country: the profile of union activists themselves. Through the sites that unions keep and the names listed there, it is possible to obtain data on the gender composition of leadership, although largely restricted to those who are currently at the helm. The same cannot be said regarding race/color. Unlike what happens in the USA, Brazilian schemes of racial classification are object of controversy. The government organization that is responsible for census research, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, recognizes the existence of five racial groups, elucidated in terms of 'color' (white, indigenous, Black, brown and yellow). Furthermore, self-classification may not be the same as how a person is classified by others, and vice versa. Thus, an individual who considers him or herself as 'brown' may be seen by others as 'Black' just as one who is seen as 'white' by others may consider him or herself as 'Black' or 'brown' by virtue of his or her ancestry. In this last case, the official classificatory system does not coincide with the identity system that has emerged in the country over the last two decades. Even more complex is the situation of union activists and members of non-normative sexual and gender identities. Although many now openly express their sexual orientation, others remain within the shadow of the closet. Since sexual orientation in Brazil continues to be seen as a matter of the private sphere, we envision scant prospects for future research on the profile of

union members and activists in dealing with this issue<sup>58</sup>. Discovering more on the profile of union leadership and rank and file is crucial if we want to understand the current place and prospects for the future regarding issues of gender, race, sexual orientation and gender identity within the union agenda.

We also want to make use of these final considerations to emphasize the importance of understanding the limitations that unions face in the advancement of disadvantaged groups and the diversity within them, and within the university environment and society as a whole. On the one hand, it is undeniable that university faculty unions enjoy advantages that do not exist within other types of unions, linked to factors such as higher budgets and higher level of cultural capital. On the other hand, there are two relevant matters we must yet consider.

The first, already alluded to here, has to do with the fact that union actions do not solely reflect the beliefs of their directorate. It is certainly true that the latter hold strong power of persuasion, are responsible for organizing and defining the issues that are to be debated and are even able to act manipulatively. Nonetheless, their power is limited by the actions and attitudes of the rank and file, that express their positions through numerous existing channels, positions which may even enter into direct conflict with union leadership. This rank and file, given the different capitals<sup>59</sup> that they hold, must always be taken into account in any analysis of the practices that unfold within the ambit of higher education unionism.

The second issue has to do with the difficulties observed as of the end of the military regime, in terms of negotiations between faculty associations and the federal government. Cancelled hearings, agreements that have not been respected, troubled negotiation processes: all have led to lengthy strikes at federal universities. However great the ability faculty unions have to mobilize, they all encounter serious difficulties when obliged to confront a gigantic administrative structure such as that of the Brazilian federal government with its legal and administrative prerogatives<sup>60</sup>.

Having left many issues open to further study and debate, we conclude here

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<sup>58</sup> It is important to emphasize that this problem is not exclusive to this arena. In essence, it is only very recently that data on color/race, sexual orientation and gender identity have begun to be collected within different educational, health and social welfare institutions, a factor which has contributed to the relative invisibility of these groups.

<sup>59</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre, *Language and symbolic power*.

<sup>60</sup> Miranda, Kênia, *Lutas por educação no Brasil recente: o movimento docente da educação superior*, Ed. Uff, Niterói, 2017.

by pointing to the fact that, in general, issues of disadvantaged groups and the recognition of the value of diversity on the agenda of university faculty unions remain in secondary position.

However, we also see a progressive tendency toward moving them into a more relevant position. This tendency is particularly more significant in terms of policies to increase women's participation in union leadership. The ANDES, for example, established within its election regulations for the 2020-2022 term that "*positions of the presidency, executive secretariat and treasury be filled in such a way as to guarantee the participation of at least six women*"<sup>61</sup>. Furthermore, that same union has determined, within its statutes (revised in 2020) that "*Filling of positions within all regional secretariats must guarantee the presence of women, with a minimum number of 36, ensuring that at least one woman is in the position of first and second vice-presidency within all regions*"<sup>62</sup>.

On the one hand, this serves as a stimulus for those who are engaged with these issues, yet must also be brought in with utmost care. Issues such as these are always subject to the shifting winds of 'moral conjunctures'. With regard to Brazil today, we observe an intensifying wave of conservatism that is threatening to brake advancement on issues of human rights, particularly as they apply to the sexual and reproductive rights that until recently were assumed to be relatively consolidated<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> ANDES, "Regimento Eleitoral: Eleição da diretoria do ANDES-SINDICATO NACIONAL – Biênio 2020/2022", 2020, [bit.ly/2XNqeuH](https://bit.ly/2XNqeuH) (Consulted on 09/06/2020).

<sup>62</sup> ANDES, "ESTATUTO (ATUALIZADO E CONSOLIDADO ATÉ O 39º CONGRESSO)", 2020, [bit.ly/2XNIPXC](https://bit.ly/2XNIPXC) (Consulted on 09/06/2020).

<sup>63</sup> PROIFES, "Carta de São Carlos", 2018, [bit.ly/2vHSROO](https://bit.ly/2vHSROO) (Consulted on 20/12/2019).

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