

## CHAPTER 7

# Political Inclusion and Representation of Afrodescendant Women in Latin America

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### INTRODUCTION

Women have gained access to elected office in record numbers in Latin America, and evidence suggests that they are acting to advance women's rights (see, e.g., Schwindt-Bayer 2006, 2009; Htun et al. 2013; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Taylor-Robinson and Heath 2003).<sup>1</sup> Yet not *all* women are present in power. Most of the women who occupy decision making positions are fair-skinned and Spanish speaking. Members of intersectionally disadvantaged sub-groups—particularly Afrodescendant<sup>2</sup> and indigenous women—are scarce. Though their numbers are growing, few have gained access to elected office, which is conspicuous in light of growing awareness of the racial and ethnic heterogeneity of the region.

The political exclusion of minority women raises several questions. How and through what means do women members of subordinate racial and ethnic groups gain access to power? What does it mean to represent intersectionally disadvantaged categories of women? How can the quality of representation offered by Afrodescendant women be assessed? Does their political presence affect democratic practices?

1. I am grateful for research assistance from Elvira Pichardo-Delacour, and comments and discussion from participants at the TAMU conference.

2. "Afrodescendant" has become the preferred way to refer to the collection of Latin Americans with some degree of African ancestry, largely replacing "Afro-Latin," "Afro-Brazilian," "negro," and so forth. It is both a noun and an adjective. In this chapter, "Afrodescendant" will be used interchangeably with "black" and "Afrodescendants" with "blacks."

This chapter poses some preliminary answers to these questions by focusing on the political inclusion and representation of Afrodescendant women in seven Latin American countries: Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.<sup>3</sup> I show that Afrodescendant women tend to be under-represented relative to women as a whole and to Afrodescendants as a whole, with the exception of Ecuador. Afrodescendants tend not to cluster in a particular party, but to get elected from parties on both sides of the partisan spectrum, though in Brazil black women are more likely to come from parties of the Left.

By identifying patterns of Afrodescendant women's presence in politics, this chapter considers the *who* question posed by this volume. Addressing the volume's other principal questions—namely, *what* interests they are representing and *how* this occurs—requires broader reflection on what it means to represent the interests of intersectionally disadvantaged sub-groups (and, indeed, whether we can attribute interests to them in the first place). With regard to Afrodescendant women, it is tempting to posit a list of their interests and then seek to match them against the behavior of elected officials. Taking theories of intersectionality seriously, however, cautions against such an approach. Intersectionality maintains that the effects of social structures are mutually constitutive and conditioning, not additive (Hancock, Chapter 3 of this volume and 2007; Weldon 2008; García Bedolla 2007). Afrodescendant women's interests cannot be derived from—or predicted by—women's interests or Afrodescendant interests.<sup>4</sup>

What matters most, I argue, is whether legislators are taking action to combat Afrodescendant women's disadvantage and exclusion. Though numbers are too small to permit systematic analysis, qualitative investigation of selected cases reveals that most, but not all, Afrodescendant women in office have taken initiatives to reverse the invisibility suffered by Afrodescendants in the region. Motivated by a concern for other members of their category as

3. These countries were chosen for the following reasons. First, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Ecuador had, according to national census data available in the mid-2000s, the largest Afrodescendant populations in the region (with the exception of Cuba, with the third largest population, but where the lack of democratic politics preclude analysis of representation and inclusion) (del Popolo et al. 2009). Peru and Uruguay were also included since, though they lacked census data in the mid-2000s, survey estimates at the time revealed a sizable Afrodescendant presence. Both countries have Afrodescendants in the national legislature and civic associations organizing around Afrodescendant rights. Venezuela was included since scholarly observers had always estimated its Afrodescendant population to be large, though this was not confirmed through official data until 2011.

4. As I argue later, the interests of these groups cannot be posited *a priori* either. As Beckwith maintains in Chapter 2 of this volume, group interests ideally emerge from processes of democratic deliberation. Instead of talking about the representation of interests, it makes more sense to talk about whether legislators are taking action to combat structural disadvantages.

well as pressure from the international development community, they have raised awareness about racism and social exclusion. In this way, this chapter delves into the meaning of what other scholars call “substantive representation” and its connection to “descriptive” or “surrogate” representation as discussed by Dahlerup (Chapter 4 of this volume).

Following Mansbridge, I argue that Afrodescendant women in power offer surrogate representation. The quality of their representative behavior should be judged not on principal-agent terms but in terms of their contribution to democratic deliberation. They introduce new issues to national political agendas and compel others to adopt an intersectional perspective by serving as a reminder of the inherent heterogeneity of social groups and identities. Their political presence proves that the category “women” includes black women, Asian women, lesbian women, poor women, and more, and that the category “Afrodescendants” includes women as well as men. Merely by being present in power, they prevent people from ignoring or denying this inescapable reality of a diverse society and compel them to take it into account. This improves democratic representation and governance. In addition, my findings challenge the simple  $A \rightarrow B$  expectation predicted by Implication 2.1 (see Chapter 1 of this volume)—that women in government will articulate women’s interests more than ~~men, and by extension~~ that Afrodescendant women will represent Afrodescendant women’s interests. Yet this chapter offers evidence in support of Implication 2.2A: as the visibility of women (including Afrodescendant women) as a politically-relevant group and their access to government venues expands, a greater range of interests will be articulated.

## AFRODESCENDANT WOMEN AND RACIAL FORMATION

Estimates suggest that Afrodescendants comprise around one-third of the population of Latin America, amounting to some 80 to 150 million people (del Popolo et al. 2009: 74).<sup>5</sup> These numbers are surprising because countries of the region—with few exceptions—have tended to portray themselves as largely white in the media and popular culture. George W. Bush’s alleged question to Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso—“Do you have blacks too?”<sup>6</sup>—reflects the resulting ignorance of the region’s heterogeneity.

Racial discourses espoused by Latin American elites are largely responsible for these impressions. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nationalist elites—partially in response to scientific racism emanating from Europe—portrayed their countries as racially mixed and growing steadily

5. This section partially draws from Htun 2012.

6. Originally reported in *Der Spiegel* on May 19, 2002. See: <http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/0,1518,196865,00.html> (accessed February 13, 2012).

whiter (Skidmore 1993; Stepan 1996; Graham 1990). Countries such as Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela—all with extremely large Afrodescendant populations—did not segregate and classify their citizenry along the US and South African models. They embraced a plurality of categories of color that were flexible, contextually defined, and translatable (as in the adage, “money whitens”) (Harris 1964; Degler 1986; Marx 1998). Intellectuals and political elites interpreted and framed social inequalities in terms of class, not race.

The state plays a singular role in “making” race by counting bodies in the census, allocating rights differentially, and segregating groups geographically (Marx 1998; Jung 2008; Htun 2004a). This raises the question of whether, in light of Latin American states’ reluctance to count, classify, and segregate by race, “race” really exists there at all. Most white Brazilians—and Venezuelans and Colombians—historically denied that it did and many still see the recent entrance of affirmative action and other racial discourses as marks of US imperialism (see also Bourdieu and Wacquant 1999). Yet it is undeniable that Latin American countries are stratified along color lines and that racism is pervasive. The darker one’s skin, the lower one’s life chances, social status, and economic opportunities tend to be (see, e.g., Reid Andrews 2004; Telles 2004; Wade 1997). Racially inflected terms to label and insult others proliferate in popular discourse, and racist behavior is widespread (see, e.g., Sheriff 2001).

The ambiguity of race in the region is reflected in the difficulty of acquiring statistical data on the social status and opportunities of Afrodescendants. Though many countries historically gathered information on indigenous populations, not until 2000 did Spanish-speaking countries collect data on race (with the exception of Cuba). In the early 2000s, only 9 of 19 Latin American countries collected data on Afrodescendant populations, and the criteria for counting differed across countries. By 2013, however, far more countries had gathered such data, though terms and criteria still differed.<sup>7</sup>

What is more, counting criteria tend systematically to underestimate the number of Afrodescendants. The internationally accepted standard for census counts is self-identification of racial and ethnic identity. All Latin American countries except for Cuba conform to this practice (Del Popolo et al. 2009: 63). Yet many people who are socially identified and treated as black are unwilling to self-identify this way because of racial stigmas and preferences for lighter skin. During their work on race and censuses in the region, “World Bank staff discovered that despite the quality of the questions asked, the level of technical support and the participation of Afro leaders, there was a low rate of self-identification as Afrodescendant” (Telles 2010: 8). This cross-national

7. Census results on the numbers of minority citizens vary depending on what categories are used (examples include: *Preto*, *Pardo*, *Moreno*, *Mulato*, *Afrocolombiano*) and how the question is worded.

variation precludes good comparisons of racial inequality and the design of policies to combat racism (Del Popolo et al. 2009: 62; Telles 2010).

With these caveats in mind, Table 7.1 presents available data on the size of the Afrodescendant group in Latin American countries.

Correlated with other social indicators, these data reveal significant racial differences in poverty levels, education, and wages. In Brazil, for example, 43% of blacks (*pretos* and *pardos*) lived below the poverty line in 2006, a decline of nine points from 54% in 1995. For whites, the figures were 22% and 28%, respectively. This implies a 21-point gap in the size of the black and white impoverished populations relative to their total numbers (Paixão and Carvano 2008: 121). Racial gaps persist in education. The average educational attainment of a black Brazilian in 2006 was 6.2 years (an increase from 4.3 years in 1995). For whites, the numbers are 8.0 and 6.4, respectively. This implies a gap of 1.8 years in 2006 (slightly smaller than 1995's gap of 2.1 years) (Paixão and Carvano 2008: 69). (For information on Colombia and the region generally, see Cruces et al. 2010; Atal et al. 2009.)

**Table 7.1. AFRODESCENDANT POPULATION IN LATIN AMERICA (NUMBERS ARE ROUNDED OFF TO THE 1000S)**

Countries	Total Population	Year	Afrodescendant Population	Percentage
Argentina	40,117,000	2010	150,000	0.4
Bolivia	10,027,000	2012	24,000	0.2
Brazil	190,733,000	2010	97,083,000	50.9
Chile	16,636,000	2012	97,000	0.6
Colombia	42,954,000	2005	4,274,000	10.5
Costa Rica	4,302,000	2011	334,000	7.8
Cuba	11,163,000	2012	3,885,000	34.8
Dominican Republic	9,445,000	2010	8,980,000	89.0
Ecuador	14,484,000	2010	1,043,000	7.2
El Salvador	5,744,000	2007	7,000	0.13
Guatemala	14,713,000	2011	5,000	0.0
Honduras	8,448,000	2011	59,000	1.0
Mexico	112,337,000	2010	2,366,000	2.2
Nicaragua	5,142,000	2005	23,000	0.4
Panama	3,454,000	2010	313,000	9.2
Paraguay	6,673,000	2012	234,000	3.5
Peru	27,412,000	2007	411,000	1.5
Uruguay	3,286,000	2011	255,000	7.8
Venezuela	27,228,000	2011	14,534,000	53.4

AQ: Is update needed?

*Source:* Telles et. al. forthcoming. His data are from the latest round of national censuses. The Venezuela figure includes people who self-identify as "moreno."

Though the status of Afrodescendant women cannot be deduced merely by adding the effects of racial and gender hierarchies (Hancock 2007; Weldon 2008), data suggest that the combination, multiplication, and/or interaction of these two axes of disadvantage renders them vulnerable. Atal's study, for example, found that women members of subordinate ethnic and racial groups in Latin America have the lowest position in the labor market. The wage gap between white men and black and brown women is 60 points (though most of this can be explained by their differing educational levels, places of employment, and other variables) (Atal et al. 2009: 37).

### ACCESS TO ELECTED OFFICE

Composing a picture of Afrodescendant representation required collecting original data. No country collects information on the race, color, or ethnicity of elected officials. Even in Brazil, where data are otherwise plentiful, scholars must estimate the racial composition of the legislature by classifying photos on file with the National Electoral Tribunal or relying on self-declaration in private surveys (Paixão and Carvano 2008). What's more, criteria for external classification and for self-declaration vary. In Brazil, for example, several self-declared Afrodescendant legislators have relatively fair skin color. In countries where race is less politicized and discourses of whitening more prevalent, it is possible that individuals with similar phenotype would be less likely to identify as Afrodescendant.

I estimated numbers of Afrodescendants in national legislatures crudely by classifying legislator photos available on congressional websites for every country except Brazil.<sup>8</sup> Ideally, it would be supplemented by two additional levels of measurement: (1) validation by the legislator in question that she or he identifies as Afrodescendant; and (2) intersubjective confirmation by legislative staff, political journalists, and others in the milieu that the legislator is “known as black.” I have not yet had the resources to do this. Preliminary data are presented in Table 7.2.

In Brazil, the country for which data are most readily available, there were a total of 44 black federal deputies elected in 2010 (2010–14 mandate) out of 513, making up some nine percent of the total (see Table 7.2).<sup>9</sup> This included

8. This methodology is not unprecedented: it was used by Paixão and Carvano's team at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro for the 2008–2009 report on Brazil's racial inequalities. The Brazil data in this chapter (for a more recent legislature than that studied by Paixão and Carvano) come from Universo Online's “Congresso em foco” (see Table 7.2).

9. For a count, see “Os deputados que se autodeclararam negros.” Available at: [http://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/noticia.asp?cod\\_canal=21&cod\\_publicacao=36175](http://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/noticia.asp?cod_canal=21&cod_publicacao=36175) (accessed July 11, 2011). I added one person (Eliane Rolim—PT/RJ) to the list. As a *suplente*, she was not part of the original count.

**Table 7.2. AFRODESCENDANTS IN NATIONAL LEGISLATURES IN SIX LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, 2013**

Country	Total blacks	Black women	Total # of legislators	Blacks as a % of total
<b>Brazil</b>				
Chamber	44	7	513	8.60%
Senate	1	0	81	1.20%
<b>Colombia</b>				
House	7	0	165	4.20%
Senate	2	0	102	2%
<b>Costa Rica</b>				
Unicameral	0	0	57	0%
<b>Ecuador</b>				
Unicameral	9	5	137	6.60%
<b>Peru</b>				
Unicameral	3	3	130	2.30%
<b>Uruguay</b>				
House	1	0	99	1%
Senate	0	0	31	0%
<b>Venezuela</b>				
Unicameral	4	1	165	2.40%

AQ: Is update needed?

*Source:* Htun (forthcoming), based on her calculations of elected (titular) representatives.

seven Afrodescendant women. In 2006, there were 46 black deputies elected, but only three women (Paixão and Carvano 2008: 148).<sup>10</sup> As this suggests, the number of Afrodescendant women elected to the lower house of the Brazilian congress doubled from three to six deputies in one electoral cycle. In addition, one black female deputy assumed office as an alternate, bringing the total to seven. Overall numbers of women stayed the same (at 9%). No black women were elected to the Senate in 2006 or 2010, though the total number of women skyrocketed from four to 13.<sup>11</sup>

In both Brazilian chambers, black legislators as a whole do not concentrate ideologically: they were elected from parties across the political spectrum.

10. There is no official data on legislator race or ethnicity in Brazil or any opportunity for elected officials to declare their race or ethnicity. The 2006 data mentioned here are based on subjective classification of photos by the research team at LAESER (Laboratory for Statistical, Economic, and Social Analysis of Race Relations) in Rio de Janeiro (Paixão and Carvano 2008: 145).

11. In 2006, five of 81 senators were black men. Data for 2010 were not available. These numbers mark a dramatic improvement over previous decades. In the 1990s, for example, there were only about 15 black deputies in the lower house of congress (Johnson 2000). (The number of black women deputies is unknown.) Still, it is important to bear in mind that Afrodescendants make up over half of the Brazilian population.

In the Lower House in 2006, some 45% of black deputies were elected from leftist parties and some 55% from parties of the Center and Right (Paixão and Carvano 2008: 149–51).<sup>12</sup> Yet in 2010, six of seven black women in the Chamber of Deputies were from parties of the Left: four were elected by the PT, two by the PC do B. Only one deputy—Andreia Zito of the PSDB—came from a Center party. No black female deputies were elected from parties of the Right, suggesting that their path to power may be distinctive from those of Afrodescendant men.

In Colombia in 2013, Afrodescendants made up a mere 4% of the Chamber of Representatives (some seven of 165, including the deputies elected for the seats reserved for “black communities”) and 2% of the Senate (two of 102). There were no women among them.<sup>13</sup> In the past, however, Colombia had elected black women to the lower house: at least two were elected in the seats reserved for “black communities” and one from the province of San Andrés and Providencia. As in Brazil, Afrodescendants in the Colombian congress are affiliated with a broad range of political parties (including two from the Liberal Party, two from the PIN, and one each from Afrovides, Movimiento Popular Unido, the Conservative Party and the Partido de la U).

Costa Rica did not have a single Afrodescendant man or woman in parliament in 2013, a significant break from past practice. From 1953 until his death in 1990, former president and chief political boss José Figueres used his power to guarantee the presence of at least one Afrodescendant member of the 57-person congress. He made sure the National Liberation Party (PLN, the dominant party) put an Afrodescendant candidate in an electable position on a party list, usually in Limón province. In total, there have been 17 Afrodescendant legislators elected via this route.<sup>14</sup>

In 2013, Ecuador was the only Latin American country where the presence of Afrodescendants in parliament was proportional to their population size. That year, the country had approximately nine black legislators, almost 7% of parliament. According to the census, Afrodescendants made up some 7% of the total population. Five of the nine legislators were women, and eight legislators came from President Rafael Correa’s party (PAIS). In the previous legislature (2009–13), there were three Afrodescendant legislators, including one woman. In Peru, three Afrodescendant women held seats in congress. (There are no male Afrodescendant legislators.) All three black women in Peru’s congress were former volleyball players, elected from different parties (Fuerza

12. Party affiliation data were not disaggregated by sex for the 2006 legislature.

13. These data are based on author’s classification of legislator photos on the Congreso Visible website: <http://www.congresovisible.org/congresistas/> (accessed June 23, 2011). The statutory size of the Chamber is 166, but just 165 members were elected.

14. Interview with Walter Robinson, July 26, 2011. Robinson was the 14th deputy elected this way and Epsy Campbell the 15th.

2011, Perú Posible, and Gana Perú). Of Venezuela's four Afrodescendant legislators, one was a woman.

In summary, these data show that Afrodescendant women held national elected office in only four of the seven countries analyzed. Afrodescendant men held seats in two more (Colombia and Uruguay). Only Costa Rica had no Afrodescendant representation, a break from its historical pattern. With the exceptions of Ecuador and Peru, Afrodescendant women were even more under-represented in national legislatures than the black group as a whole and than women as a whole. The challenges faced by women from subordinate racial and ethnic groups are not unique to Latin America. Based on her analysis of some 80 countries, Hughes (2011) finds that minority women's odds of getting elected to the national legislature are 1 in 14 compared to majority men, 1 in 2 compared to minority men, and 1 in 3 compared to majority women. In a different work, I analyze political interventions to boost their presence in elected office (Htun 2012) and conclude, following Hughes, that a combination of gender quotas and race-based group representation policies (tandem quotas) is the most promising strategy.

## INTERSECTIONALITY AND REPRESENTATION

As Beckwith points out in Chapter 2 of this volume, social structures and institutions tend to position women at a disadvantage relative to men. (They also position whites more advantageously than blacks.) Women's disadvantageous structural position provokes episodes of collective action to improve their situation—episodes in which they articulate interests, introduce issues, and express preferences. To the extent that women have interests in common, it is by virtue of a shared social position, not a common identity. Interests arise situationally as groups—who may not reflect the broader category—mobilize to combat disadvantage. Many scholars refer to this process as the “substantive representation of women's interests” (but see Dahlerup, Chapter 4 of this volume). Resisting a preemptive definition of “women's interests,” I prefer to speak in terms of advocacy and legislative behavior on behalf of women's rights (Htun et al. 2013).

What about the interests of sub-groups of women, such as Afrodescendant women, lesbian women, poor women, and so forth? We know from theories of intersectionality that social structures of gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, among others, produce differences and hierarchies among women (see, e.g., Crenshaw 1991; Hancock 2007; Weldon 2008; García Bedolla 2007). Such theories argue that the effect of social structures is not additive, but mutually constitutive: race *conditions*, and *transforms*, the experience of sexist oppression. As a result, we cannot identify sub-group interests by adding

Afrodescendant interests to women's interests and then subtracting the male part (see Hancock, Chapter 3 of this volume). Afrodescendant women may have unique perspectives and face unique disadvantages that are not derivative of—or predicted by—the larger categories to which they belong. What is more, their perspectives may vary due to class, regional, religious, and, of course, individual differences.

As Beckwith notes, women's interests are ideally formulated during processes of democratic deliberation and decision making. This suggests that the identification of Afrodescendant women's interests should flow from their group-specific organization, articulation of perspectives, and formulation of positions. At the Fourth Regional Meeting of Afrodescendant Women, held in Costa Rica in 2011, participants emitted a Declaration that focused on combating the social exclusion produced by racism and sexism, with special mention of the need to analyze quota systems that would facilitate the election of minority women.<sup>15</sup> This suggests that Afrodescendant women have an interest in being full partners in society and in having a place in political decision making. To what extent are women in office taking action to combat the exclusions and disadvantages precluding such parity in participation (see Fraser 2007)?

### ASSESSING AFRODESCENDANT WOMEN'S LEGISLATIVE BEHAVIOR

Though few Afrodescendant women have gained access to elected office, enough are present to engage in a preliminary analysis of their behavior. I will argue that the type of representation that Afrodescendant women offer differs from traditional, principal-agent models of representation: they are "surrogate" representatives. Measuring and evaluating surrogate representation involves different standards from those applied to traditional notions of representation (Mansbridge 2003).

#### Traditional Representation

The dominant understanding of representation in democratic theory revolves around "promissory" representation, or the principal-agent relationship between citizens and their elected representatives. In this model, citizens or voters select or authorize representatives to pursue their interests, instructions, and desires (Urbinati and Warren 2008; Mansbridge 2003; Przeworski

15. See text of the Declaration at: <http://mujeresafrocostarricenses.blogspot.com/>.

et al. 1999; Pitkin 1967). The quality of representation can therefore be judged by the extent to which the representative acted in line with voter preferences. Voters exercise quality control by virtue of their ability to hold representatives accountable at election time.

This notion of representation does not apply to the relationship between Afrodescendant women voters and female elected officials for the simple reason that Afrodescendant women do not constitute an electoral constituency. In every Latin American country, constituencies—understood as the group of voters that elects a representative—are defined by geography, not by social status.<sup>16</sup> Even in large multimember districts and permissive electoral systems where politicians are known to construct individual “bailiwicks” of voters from different residential areas, there is little evidence that race—or even gender—are consistently salient criteria.<sup>17</sup>

In certain regions where they are geographically concentrated—such as the Chocó in Colombia—Afrodescendants arguably constitute an electoral constituency. But *Afrodescendant women* are not a constituency since the districts include both male and female voters. What is more, studies show that voter motivations in the Chocó are largely distributional: they want their representatives to channel more national funding to their region. Very few Chocoano voters support candidates with platforms focused on ethnic and racial issues. This is evident in voting patterns for politicians contesting the country’s reserved seats for “black communities.” Most Chocoano voters have voted for candidates from the Liberal Party, not for those with platforms of “ethnic rights” (Agudelo 2000, 2002).

How do Afrodescendant women in elected office perform as agents responsive to the interests of their principals, the voters who elected them? Evidence suggests that they have taken action to benefit their communities. Zobeida Gudiño of Ecuador, reporting on her legislative activity to her district, said that she obtained important results in financing for the construction of schools, hospitals, and electrification, among other projects.<sup>18</sup> Leyla Chihuán Ramos of Peru emphasized her efforts to bring electrical power to a poor, isolated rural community to improve its prospects for economic

16. Colombia’s reserved seats for indigenous peoples and “black communities” constitute an exception. Though only indigenous and Afrodescendant candidates can run for election in these seats, anyone can vote for them. At the time of voting, any voter can opt to cast their vote for one of the reserved seat candidates or to vote in the more general contest. Voters are not segregated by race or ethnicity. For more information, see Htun (forthcoming).

17. Ames argues, however, that politicians sometimes seek to aggregate votes of Japanese Brazilians across different geographical zones (1995: 328).

18. <http://asambleanacional.gob.ec/201108186287/noticias/boletines/asambleista-zobeida-gudino-expone-principales-lineas-de-accion-de-su-gestion.html> (accessed February 15, 2012).

development.<sup>19</sup> Janete Pietá of Brazil inaugurated public housing—financed by the federal government—in the Guarulhos area of São Paulo for former residents of favelas, and has sought the creation of an omnibus “social fund.”<sup>20</sup>

These activities conform to the expectations of voters. According to Paula Moreno, former minister of culture of Colombia (and the country’s first black female minister), representation means the provision of goods: “When you ask someone what representation means for them, and what matters, they say: “What have you done for Tolima [a Colombian department]?” Doing something for Tolima, in turn, means increasing its budget and raising its social status through symbolic gestures such as declaring and recognizing folk holidays.<sup>21</sup>

Is helping to advance the status of Afrodescendant women part of “doing something for Tolima?” Perhaps, but not explicitly. In fact, the dynamics of promissory representation—under which representatives are expected to deliver goods to a broad constituency—may conflict with overt activism to ameliorate the disadvantage of particular social groups. As one aspiring politician from Panama said in a group discussion: “[W]e are excluded because we are women and also because we are black. But if I actively assume the Afrodescendant label and identity, people think that I’m interested only in Afrodescendant issues. And that’s limiting. I have to legislate for everyone. I have to represent everyone.” Representative Zobeida Gudiño from Ecuador agreed: “I get elected by everyone.”<sup>22</sup>

### Surrogate Representation

Notwithstanding the perceived need to “represent everyone,” there is evidence that some Afrodescendant women legislators have taken special action to advocate for the rights of women, Afrodescendants, and other marginalized groups. In addition, they contribute to democratic politics by their mere presence, reversing the historic invisibility of Afrodescendant peoples in sites of political power, evinced by the absence of any Afrodescendants among the portraits that cover the salons and corridors of Latin American government buildings.<sup>23</sup>

19. <http://leylachihuan.pe/congresita-leyla-chihuan-ramos-intercede-a-favor-de-la-municipalidad-distrital-de-quinocay-yauyos-region-lima/#more-1189> (accessed February 15, 2012).

20. <http://www.janeterochapieta.com.br/?p=3525>

21. Interview, San José, Costa Rica, July 26, 2011.

22. Htun’s notes from group discussion at the Fourth Regional Conference of Afrodescendant Women, San José, Costa Rica, July 27, 2011.

23. This reality promoted former Brazilian Minister for Racial Equality Matilde Ribeiro to declare, “I want to see photographs of black comrades [*companheiras negras e companheiros negros*] on the walls of these legislative chambers.”

To assess linkages between Afrodescendant women voters and those in elected office, the “surrogate” model of representation is more useful than traditional notions. “Surrogates” provide representation to voters from different districts, particularly those with whom they share experiences in a way that the majority of the legislature does not (Mansbridge 2003: 523). This describes the relationship between Afrodescendant women officials and members of the broader category, whose perspectives they may feel compelled to represent for reasons “internal to their own convictions, consciences, and identities” (Mansbridge 2003: 524). The quality of surrogate representation cannot be evaluated by the same standards as promissory or principal-agent representation since surrogates represent constituencies that did not elect them and cannot be held accountable in traditional ways. Mansbridge argues that the pertinent normative concern for surrogate representation is whether, in the aggregate: (1) the most conflictual interests in the polity are represented in rough proportions; and (2) all relevant perspectives are present in deliberation over key policy decisions. Assessing the quality of surrogate representation shifts our attention from the dyadic constituent-representative relationship to the *overall composition and behavior of the parliament* (Mansbridge 2003: 524–25, emphasis added).

Mansbridge’s perspective implies that evaluating the representative contribution of Afrodescendant women (and other “surrogate” representatives) requires analysis not just of their own actions but of the deliberative practices and representational behavior of the *parliament as a whole*. What are the symbolic, behavioral, and discursive effects of the presence of Afrodescendant women legislators? How do others respond to them? Do their contributions transform parliamentary discourse? Mansbridge argues that surrogate representation has the potential to increase systemic democratic legitimacy. How does the political inclusion of Afrodescendant women affect the quality of democracy?

As this suggests, the important question is not whether Afrodescendant women in elected office are precisely channeling the perspectives of the broader category. To the extent that they are formulated during inclusive and democratic deliberation, Afrodescendant women’s interests may vary from place to place and may be subject to change. Rather, the pertinent issue is whether Afrodescendant elected officials are taking action to combat the conditions that disadvantage women, Afrodescendants, Afrodescendant women, and other marginalized social groups, and whether these activities and the mere presence of Afrodescendant women representatives are shaping the overall legislative and political climate.

Janete Pietá of Brazil, for example, is one of the founders of the Workers’ Party (PT) who was elected to the lower house of congress in 2006 after working in the PT’s municipal administration in Guarulhos. She has long advocated Afrodescendant and women’s rights, including anti-discrimination,

protection from violence against women, prenatal care, breast cancer care, and the rights of residents of Quilombos (communities formed by runaway slaves). From 2006 to 2010, she coordinated the women's caucus and the black caucus within the PT, reminding both constituencies that the category "women" includes Afrodescendants and that the Afrodescendant category includes women. In the 2010–2014 legislature, she was vice-leader of the PT caucus and coordinated the interparty women's caucus.<sup>24</sup>

Representative Leyla Chichuán of Peru was the president of the congressional Afro Peruvian working group, whose work consisted primarily of sponsoring and supporting theater, artistic, and musical events to increase public appreciation of Afro-Peruvian contributions to history and culture.<sup>25</sup> She authored bills to promote the recognition of Afro-Peruvians and to combat discrimination, often in collaboration with the two other Afrodescendant women representatives. She was also active on women's rights and on issues pertaining to sports.

In Ecuador, Representative Zobeida Gudiño presented bills to recognize collective Afrodescendant rights and served as a spokeswoman for President Correa's anti-discrimination initiatives. Her goal was to see that the Afro-Ecuadorian sector is "taken into account in the laws that are approved by the National Assembly."<sup>26</sup>

Though no black women occupied seats in the Colombian congress in 2013, they have taken initiatives on behalf of both women and Afrodescendants in previous legislatures. Former Senator Piedad Córdoba served as a global spokesperson on these issues, as well as gay rights, during her many years in elected office (1992–2010). Former Deputy María Isabel Urrutia (2002–2006), though elected because of her gold medal in the Sydney Olympics, assumed a mandate to promote Afrodescendant rights once in office and sought to combat racism (Htun forthcoming).

Former Costa Rican representative Epsy Campbell Barr (2002–2006) acquired regional and international fame with her work on behalf of black rights and women's rights. A charismatic speaker, she called global attention to the low social status of Afrodescendants and mobilized the commitment of the international development community to social inclusion policies. In addition, Campbell Barr organized regional networks of Afrodescendant women, steering and participating in numerous groups including the Network of Afro-Latin American, Afro-Caribbean and Diaspora Women, the Black Parliament of the Americas, the Central American Black Organization, and the Alliance of Leaders of African Descent in Latin America and the

24. <http://www.janeterochapieta.com.br/?p=2119>.

25. <http://leylachihuan.pe/category/mta/>

26. Personal conversation, San José, Costa Rica, July 2011.

Caribbean. In addition, [Epsy](#) serves as president of the Afro-Costa Rican Women's Center.<sup>27</sup>

Though serving as an alternate, not a titular deputy, Angélica Ferreira of Uruguay upheld a mandate to defend Afrodescendant and women's rights. She claimed that her placement on a party list—albeit as *suplente*—was the first for a black woman and that she strongly hoped that “more black women and black men will look at themselves and begin to occupy visible spaces in society without being afraid.”<sup>28</sup> In congress, she gave speeches about the contributions made by Afrodescendants to Uruguayan history and also advocated women's rights.<sup>29</sup> She noted: “Looking at the books, we noticed the lack of Afro-Uruguayan history. We did not exist.”<sup>30</sup>

These examples illustrate that Afrodescendant women from large and small parties, institutionalized and non-institutionalized party systems, programmatic and candidate-centered parties, and from the political Left and Center have advocated the interests of women and of Afrodescendants. This indicates support for Implication 2.2A and shows that surrogate representation has been occurring. Variations in how these Afrodescendant women were elected, through which parties and with what type of base, seemed to have little connection to differences in their legislative work (at least on these issues). Far more important was the growing awareness by national governments and the international community of racial inequality and mounting pressure to take action against it. International advocacy of Afrodescendant rights—exemplified by the Inter-American Development Bank's social inclusion programs, the World Bank's pressure for race data in national censuses, and the Ford Foundation's funding of movements demanding affirmative action in Brazil (Htun 2004a)—constitutes an important influence on legislative behavior. A small number of Afrodescendant women politicians have attained superstar status in local and global media and among the international development community. They are regular participants at conferences, frequently called upon as spokespeople for marginalized communities, and serve as symbols of global inclusivity. The fact that a growing number of legislators—not just Afrodescendant women—are taking action to promote their rights owes to international pressure as well as the mobilization of local constituencies.

27. While this chapter does not focus on strategizing to represent women's interests, Campbell Barr's work indicates that a multilevel strategy—national, regional, and even global—may be an important component of moving from articulation of interests to policy adoption and policy outcomes. This relates to Kang's findings (Chapter 8 of this volume) about abortion rights, and to Implication 3.1.

28. [http://www.uruguayinforme.com/news/22102009/22102009\\_dornel\\_afro.php](http://www.uruguayinforme.com/news/22102009/22102009_dornel_afro.php)

29. [http://www0.parlamento.gub.uy/forms2/fojaleg.asp?Legislaturas=47&Legislador=10015&QyBatch=n&FechaDesde=15022010&FechaHasta=17022012&Consultar=Consultar&Ini=Ini&Inf=Inf&Int=Int&Otr=Otr](http://www0.parlamento.gub.uy/forms2/fojaleg.asp?Legislaturas=47&Legislador=10015&QyBatch=n&FechaDesde=15022010&FechaHasta=17022012&FechaMin=15022010&FechaMax=17022012&Consultar=Consultar&Ini=Ini&Inf=Inf&Int=Int&Otr=Otr)

30. <http://fresaediciones-uruguay.blogspot.com/2010/04>

## CONCLUSION

Angélica Ferreira's statement, "we did not exist," points to what may be the singular democratic contribution of Afrodescendant women legislators: mere presence. Simply by being present in power, they render visible social identities and relationships long suppressed by racism and racialist ideology. There is some variation in their success. Janete Pietá rose to the rank of vice-leader of the PT in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies; former Senator Marina Silva ran for president of Brazil in 2010 and received 19% of the vote. In spite of her global fame and nomination for the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize, Piedad Cordoba, of Colombia was twice removed from congress: she was forced out in 2005 under allegations of electoral fraud and in 2010, the Colombian inspector general removed her from congress and banned her from seeking public office for 18 years for alleged ties to paramilitary groups. Black women's political behavior mirrors the strengths and weaknesses of the broader political class.

Evidence suggests that many black women in elected office served as "surrogate representatives," acting to advance the rights of women, Afrodescendants, and other marginalized groups. Based on their common positioning as members of a subordinate group by virtue of racial and gender hierarchies, as well as international pressure and greater national awareness, they perceived a mandate to speak out and introduce policy initiatives on behalf of Afrodescendant and women's rights. In some countries, such as Peru, Ecuador, and Uruguay, these efforts are relatively new. Elsewhere, such as Brazil and Colombia, they followed in a longer tradition of social movement mobilization and growing public awareness of racial stratification.

These activities enhanced the quality of democratic representation by making sure that relevant perspectives were included in deliberation and decision making (evidence in support of Implication 2.2A). Speeches made and bills introduced by Afrodescendant women kept racial discrimination and inequality on political agendas. Regardless of whether one agrees with Brazil's Statute of Racial Equality, with proposals for racial quotas on party lists and affirmative action, or with granting collective rights to Afro-Peruvians, the insertion of these ideas into debates made it impossible to ignore the reality of racial inequality. Racism and inequality are pervasive in Latin America. Yet the historic absence of Afrodescendants from positions of power helped people get away with ignoring it.

Afrodescendant women added more still. They did not represent intersectionality in the legislature, at least no more than any other politician does. Intersectionality is a perspective, not a person. It is a vision of social groups as inevitably cross-cut by multiple axes of difference. Identities of the wealthy white people who historically occupied virtually all positions of power are intersectionally constituted. Their long hold on power, however, rendered "white" and "wealthy" normative and hid ongoing exclusion and marginalization from

the purview of justice. Having Afrodescendant men in the legislature serves as a reminder of the multihued nature of Latin American societies and its oppressive racial order. The presence of Afrodescendant women provides a more profound safeguard against the sexism among Afrodescendants and the racism among women.