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"Women in poverty and informal education systems in Quito"
"Mujeres en la pobreza y sistemas de educación no formal en Quito"
Ponencia preparada para presentación en el
Primer Encuentro de LASA Sobre Estudios Ecuatorianos
18-20 de julio de 2002 Quito, Ecuador

Ongoing economic and political turmoil in Ecuador provokes active debate on who is included in or excluded by political and civil society. I approach the inclusion/exclusion debate through the racially/ethnically/class/gender marked perspectives of mestiza and Black women on informal education systems in Quito. These are women from *sectores populares*, who use informal education offered by grassroots organizations and NGOs in attempts to confront and overcome their economic, social and political exclusion worsened by Ecuador's multiple crises. The following is an initial analysis of materials from my dissertation fieldwork where I consider the different ways popular sector mestiza and Black women perceived informal education in times of crisis and the critique they presented on the forms of inclusion "sold" by NGO-supported informal education systems.

During my fieldwork, I found that Ecuador's current economic and political situation, worse than usual, had a strong negative impact on Quito's popular sector mestiza women, women's NGOs and the informal education systems they access and provide.[2] While the "follow the money" project-based approach of NGO informal education had rapid, impressive initial results for popular sector mestiza women, like greater visibility of women's issues and a growing presence of popular sector women in political and civil societies, economic crisis seemed to have brought progress to a standstill and might have put it in reverse. Without

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[2] The novelty of a bad economic situation for women's organizations and NGOs is somewhat regional. In Quito, there is a history of using financed projects to advance organizational/NGO ideology and/or goals for women. Meanwhile, women's organizations in the Southern part of Ecuador, especially those consisting of *campesinas* and indigenous, have had much less NGO involvement and outside financing. For them, working with little to no resources is nothing new and their activities and ideologies tend to reflect this.

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financing, Quito's NGOs almost completely withdrew from popular sector mestiza women's organizations. NGO withdrawal made visible the strong possibility that their rapid results approach had left Quito's popular sector mestiza women's organizations poorly prepared to continue and deal with half-started processes of political and social inclusion and their consequences.

At the same time, it seemed recent economic downturns did not have as much of a negative impact on the Black-issue focused informal education used by Quito's Black women. Quito's Afro-Ecuadorian population had always confronted severe economic and political exclusion and apparently continued more or less the same in their feelings toward, development of and use of informal education systems. Their ability to deal with little to no funding or technical support for informal education and belief in "slow but sure processes" so as to "do it your own way" in order to produce "real" change, presented a critique of the "NGO way of doing things" and its results that was rarely paralleled by mestiza women. Black women I spoke with indicated that, by living adversity and enduring slow processes, they and their organizations became critical of the meaning of inclusion in political and civil society and realized the need negotiate inclusion on their own terms. Slow processes, they explained, provided time to assimilate experiences and to create informal education and tools that would help Afro-Ecuadorians negotiate and prepare for the consequences of inclusion.

Informal education, as I define it, is synonymous with popular, alternative or nonformal education.[3] It is purposeful, systematic, yet informal (not traditionally structured) teaching and learning that occurs in a variety of locations, like women's self-help groups or grassroots economic cooperatives, not usually associated with the provision of formal (traditional) education. When I discuss popular sector mestiza women, the informal education programs

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[3] In Spanish, however, I would not be able to claim nonformal and informal education were synonymous. Gustavo Larrea Cabrera, for instance, distinguishes between *educación no formal* and *educación informal* (1990, 101). *Educación informal*, in Larrea Cabrera's text, is unsystematic learning without intention, while *educación no formal* is what an individual learns informally but systematically (ibid.). I focus on Larrea Cabrera's *educación no formal* in this study and translate it as informal education (as is usual in English, though some translate it as nonformal education). I also use a loose version of his definition. I do not consider his *educación informal* (sometimes translated as informal education in English) in my current analysis.

regard *adult women* as their focus group, but do not necessarily forbid other individuals to participate. Informal education within Afro-Ecuadorian organizations, on the other hand, focuses on adults, youth, men and women.

Some researchers would call the informal education occurring women's organizations *feminist* education (Vargas 1993, for example), especially if it 'teaches' women's rights and discusses how to resolve issues particular to women's situations. In this analysis, I do not separate feminist education from informal education because the mestiza women I spoke to did not make this division. My decision is also supported by studies like Rodríguez 1990, 1994, Lind 1992, Müller 1994, as well as personal experience, that indicate women rarely do not to learn at le ast some feminist concepts[4] while attending informal education programs and conversing with other women living in situations similar to their own.

To be fair in this analysis, I also try to present the perspectives of NGOs and other institutions in Quito who tried to provide responses to Ecuador's multiple crises and to the inclusion/exclusion debate. Most of these institutions, closely linked to mestiza women's organizations, explained that their changing responses were due to a process of transformatio n in their programming and institutional foci. They also admitted that some of these transformations were due to an economic crisis caused by shifts in the funding politics of international organisms as well as Ecuador's current situation.

CASE OVERVIEW AND STUDY CONTEXT

During my fieldwork, I spoke with and visited popular sector mestiza women's organizations from all over Quito, whose members had different "class status" within the popular sector. Although all considered themselves part of Ecuador's Women's Movement, the organizations promoted very different beliefs, a few radical socialist, another small group

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[4] Whether or not the women themselves would say they learned feminist concepts is a different story. Many women I conversed with mentioned feminism, but assuming the label of "feminist" for oneself was uncommon unless I directly asked "Are you a feminist?"

popular sector only (preferring little to no "outside" direction). Those I came to know best, however, seemed to be the majority and appeared quite dependent on the sponsoring NGO(s) who had assisted their creation. The past experiences of this last group are also the best recorded when it comes to Quito-based studies of popular sector women's organizations.

Through contact with popular sector mestiza women, I found out about the various NGOs that assisted their organizations. I came to know a few of these NGOs indirectly during their organizational visits. When I first visited Quito in 1998, my experience caused me to believe that many NGOs worked only with popular sector mestiza women and their community organizations. During the last leg of my research, my opinions changed. The majority of NGOs still worked in the popular sector, but their programming was much more limited and included youth and men as well as women. Also, through volunteer work with it in 2002, I learned a little more about the NGO responsible for consolidating and founding some of Quito's oldest popular sector women's organizations. During to this experience, NGO workers laid out how and why their NGO had changed its goals and programming, and I could see how these changes connected to the changed perspectives of popular sector mestiza women.

Coordinating institutions also played an important role in my analysis because of the consolidated perspectives they provided and their sometimes-conflictive relationships with mestiza women's popular sector organizations. In some instances, these coordinators were one step "above" popular sector women's organizations, meaning they were staffed by and coordinated activities of popular sector women at local and national levels. With one visit to coordinators like these, I could meet women from three different organizations and see socioeconomic as well as political projects in development. Then, there were other coordinators that had limited direct contact with and tended to be staffed by "professional" women of a different class status than *organizaciones de base*. They worked almost exclusively on political issues or the transformation of large-scale demands into local and national government policy.

Popular sector women's organizations, women's NGOs and coordinating institutions for various women's groups or women's activities all considered themselves part of Ecuador's Women's Movement. Unfortunately, from my perspective and theirs, these entities had serious difficulties coordinating their efforts and lost energy in duplicate (sometimes triplicate or more) programming. Some middle class and popular sector women in NGOs and coordinators commented that these entities do not want to work together, explaining that they are paranoid or suspicious (*celosos*) of each other and did not have experience forming alliances. Other middle class mestiza women and many popular sector mestiza women felt that the absence of an effective communication system between entities impeded the coordination of their efforts.

Black women participating in informal education systems, who for the most part, considered themselves an autonomous part of the Ecuadorian Women's Movement, formed a smaller group within my research than mestiza women. This was because I realized I was ignoring their perspective mid-investigation (their invisibility in theory had made them invisible to me), and I found it hard to visit the organizations they pertain to because of limited and late evening meeting times. All the same, Black women made time to meet with me individually, and I did my best to visit their organizations. In addition, I took advantage of the round tables and *apalencamientos* (the Pueblo Negro version of *cabildos*, see below) convoked by the Pueblo Negro to better grasp the processes lived and formed by Black Ecuadorians in Quito. Although the organizational processes of Black women, as a group in itself, were newer and moved slower than that of mestiza women at the time of my investigation, Ecuador's Pueblo Negro already had at least 20 years of organizational experience. The perspectives Black women shared with me broadened my understanding of popular sector experiences as well as informal education in Quito and opened my ears to what mestiza-focused organizations weren't talking about.

Quito's government, during my investigation, provided an almost nurturing context for mestiza and Black women's attempts to confront exclusion from political and civil society. With the election of Paco Moncayo as Quito's mayor in 2000 came the new promotion of an old

idea, *cabildos*. While his administration was highly criticized, especially for its management of public works, the *cabildos* project sparked my interest as an investigator of "inclusion" as well as the interest of some mestiza women's and Pueblo Negro groups. *Cabildos* were supposed to promote participative city planning and budget design by serving, initially, as spaces for various interest groups, categorized according to territory (barrios, sectors), social divisions (gender, race/ethnicity, age, sexuality, disability, etc.) and themes (security, tourism, disaster planning), to unite and discuss their needs. Later in the process, *cabildos* served as a system for interest groups to present their demands and recommendations to city government. By participating in the *cabildo* process, popular sector individuals were receiving an informal education of sorts that taught them about and opened doors to local level government participation. As might be expected, the success of *cabildos* was variable.[5] For instance, while *cabildos* were meant to include everyone, a lack of information and miscommunication made it difficult to get women's organizations to participate in the women's *cabildo*. Some women said that their organizations never received invitations to *cabildos*, making participation impossible. Other women's organizations knew of women's *cabildo* meetings, but said they did not participate because they were not allied with the mayor's political party. Party politics, however, were not the point of the *cabildos*. Or, when women participated in *cabildos* other than the women's *cabildo*, they tended not to talk about issues in relation to women's needs. Despite these issues, Quito's *cabildos* represented a novel concept leaning toward "inclusionary politics" and seemed to be opening spaces for previously excluded groups.

The idea of inclusion behind the *cabildos* also seemed to reflect in Moncayo's administration. Several women, many of whom were formed within Quito's NGOs and middle class Women's Movement, were named directors of several municipal divisions. Blacks and Indigenous also had their own interest areas within city government. Women's efforts in the administration made gender a part of local government discourse and made it policy to include a

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[5] The *cabildo* program was still in progress when I wrote this analysis. So, I cannot make any conclusions as to its final success or failure.

gender focus in city planning. The Pueblo Negro made advances as well, obtaining the inclusion of Afro-Ecuadorian History and Cosmovision in municipal teacher training and curriculum. Practice, however, was still far behind discourse, policy and training. If *cabildos* and the promotion of participative city government continued beyond Moncayo's administration, there was hope that the bases laid the past two years would lead toward long-term change.

If Quito was an apparently nurturing context for groups seeking inclusion in political and civil society, Ecuador's national context was quite the opposite. After seeing many failed or fruitless protests and strikes in two years, I could not help but recall the sardonic comment of a European tourist "Ecuador's most impressive accomplishment is keeping its people so oppressed and so poorly educated that no rebellion will work." Although not as harshly worded, popular sector mestiza and Black women regularly made similar comments while they spoke with me. They stressed how national-level government and politicians did not care about the effects of its economic mismanagement on citizens let alone indicate interest in or provide financial support to education or students. Repeatedly, they made wry comments about the futility of the current protest while, at the same time, expressing frustration at the fact that protest (or "armando un relajo") was the only way to get government attention. Our discussion on the matter would usually end with them saying something like "It has always been and will always be that way because it's always the same people in government. *Maybe* if somehow people like us could get into government then there would be some change."

PERSPECTIVES: PAST EXPERIENCES OF POPULAR SECTOR MESTIZA WOMEN

Getting people "like us" into government or getting attention through other means for the purpose of making change and meeting demands had been goals of Quito's informal education systems, as they related to popular sector mestiza women, since their beginning. They have also been the subjects of plentiful, multidisciplinary theory that, for two decades, has debated what Latin American popular sector women's increased agency and changes they achieved, alone or

in conjunction with women's NGOs, might mean for the State, politics and civil society (refer to Martin 1990, Miller 1991, Stephen 1997). [6] Yet, as I will detail later, changes in the contexts surrounding and including informal education were changing how its providers approached the above goals of political and social inclusion. Why popular sector mestiza women approached informal education and what they found when they drew near also changed along with the multiple contexts that involved them.

The early experiences of popular sector mestiza women's organizations in Quito are a good place to see women's increased agency at local levels and the changes resulting from it. Their experience covers over fifteen years, the beginning of which is analyzed in various investigations, like Lind (1992) and Rodríguez (1990, 1994). Lind and Rodríguez found that, in the process of organizing for community needs and learning together, women combined their contexts of gender, poverty and community to create empowering barrio women identities that provided them negotiating power for dealing with traditional political actors. Through their actions and creation of/participation in educational programs, they incorporated external ideologies with their own and brought them to bear internally. They also gained new knowledge and confidence from the opportunity to participate and speak in a democratically run, woman-focused program. These experiences showed them they were capable of changing gender relations at home. And, many times, they successfully changed their neighborhoods and their society on the micro-level, from the inside out, with their multiple responses and multiple identities as women, mothers, migrants, workers and community activists.

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[6] As these arguments are familiar to most, I relegate my summary of them to a footnote. Some authors think women's politics opens a space for itself in the traditional political sphere because women's actions and organizations form a new and separate institution of civil society. The space provided by this new institution provides women a place from which they can speak their needs and address general social change (Arizpe 1990, Jelin 1990 for example). Most authors do not see separation, in this case, as a negative or marginalizing issue. Many, like Müller (1994) or Martin (1990), think that women's politics is a new way of doing politics that came to be because traditional institutions are incapable and will always be incapable of serving women's needs, especially poor women's needs. Miller (1991), on the other hand, feels that women's politics will lead to changes in the political sphere as a whole. In other words, women's politics will integrate itself into all the institutions of civil society and act as a catalyst for general change in society. Finally, authors like Stephen (1997) think that the contributions women's participation makes to society (civil, political and otherwise) depends on their particular context and positioning. In some instances, their participation is new and different, rural women laborers in Brazil for example, and, in other instances, like women's participation in redemocratization movements, it is an integrated catalyst that transforms traditional political culture.

According to the experiences of many of the popular sector mestiza women I spoke to, Rodríguez and Lind´s conclusions reflected the reality of organizations and their participants at the time. They said they were indeed gaining knowledge, confidence and making a difference in their communities. As my experience with mestiza women's organizations in the popular sector grew, I also saw and people indicated long-term positive results from the early stages of popular sector mestiza women's organizational process. For example, there were a few popular sector women participating directly in local government and a larger group was active in Quito's *cabildos.* Organization women were also taking part in community boards and providing important community services, like health centers and daycares. These examples, a few out of many, implied that women's informal education had helped women overcome exclusion in political and civil society, to some extent, and supported studies by Conway and Bourque 1993, Jaquette 1994, Jelin 1990 and Stromquist 1992. These authors theorize about informal education using an explicit feminist-political twist on Freire's (1985) ideas about pragmatic educatio n for marginal groups. They argue that, through participation in democratically run women's organizations and their informal education programs, women in poverty learn rhetorical, leadership and political skills. This learning, along with the economic skills and personal support provided by participation, they theorize, enables women's abilities to take part in civil society/political activities that change their life conditions.

Before I move on, I need to stress that women's participation civil society cannot be taken for granted. Waylen and Pateman point out that modern concepts of civil society may not serve discussions of women's political participation and remind scholars to look for alternative concepts. Waylen 1994, for example, claims definitional problems obscure women's presence civil society and their political activities. She believes that women were never absent from civil society; they just participated in ways that did not fit traditional definitions. In contrast, Pateman 1988 states that modern civil society concepts, with their notions of 'fraternity,' never intended to include women. According to her, discussion of women's participation in civil society can

only happen if theorists throw out modern notions and rebuild definitions of civil and political society from ground zero.

I noticed Quito's women, through the increased or more visible activity (in civil society?) of some of their numbers, had experienced a change in life conditions of the sort implied by authors like Conway and Bourque. Although still a big problem, women in general, not just organization participants, talked about and confronted domestic violence with less difficulty, something seen as impossible ten years ago. Within popular sector mestiza women's organizations, informal education had greatly affected "veteran" participants and their experiences made them optimistic about present and future changes in women's life conditions. They said that women were now part of society instead of being on the margins and a lot of that had to do with the women's fight of which they were part. They saw that their efforts had made a difference for the next generation – their daughters had better educations, women had more opportunity to work outside of the home and woman-favorable legal reform, like that related to domestic violence, had occurred. At the personal level, they felt very proud of the fact that they, self-defined as poorly educated housewives, had overcome oppression at home, had provided important services to their communities through their organizations and had attended international women's conferences. They mentioned having added their grain of sand to the pile of change and hoped the fight for change would continue bit by bit.

Due to the fact that they played a big role in motivating and mobilizing women's organizations, I find it difficult to separate the processes lived by women's NGOs in Quito from those of popular sector mestiza women's organizations. During the first years of their existence, these entities had a near-symbiotic relationship. In many cases, nearly the whole purpose of women's NGOs was to organize and strengthen the activities of popular sector mestiza women to help them change their life conditions. Sometimes they helped legalize organizations already in the process of consolidation and other times they created an organization "from scratch." For all of the groups under their wing, the NGOs provided short-term courses on crafts and practical

skills mixed in with talks on human relations, women's rights and the need to change women's life conditions. NGOs and middle-class Women's Movement activists also worked on legal reform. With help from popular sector women's experiences and activities, entities of the Ecuadorian Women's Movement and its supporting NGOs made women-favorable advances in legislation related to domestic violence, penal law and women's political rights, most notably the Quota Law (*Ley de Cuotas*) for women in governmental decision-making positions. [7]

The educational activities of Quito's NGOs seemed to reflect or parallel (it is hard to know who influenced whom) theory that indicates education as a principal means to improve people's standard of living and their ability to participate in civil society. Statistically, Musgrove (1978) demonstrates the extent to which formal education levels can determine individual and household income, one factor of life success. Arizpe (1990) insists that women's education (she implies formal education here) will be key to Latin American development, democratization, women's emancipation and improved conditions for women. She comes to this conclusion because she believes women need education to become effective, productive (in the labor market, in politics) and aware (of the national situation) participants in society. Lower levels of education, supposedly, prevent women from accessing the experience and contacts necessary to participate in or work effectively with male dominated traditional politics (Müller 1994, as an Ecuadorian example, and Chaney 1979 is a classic Mexican study).

The NGO response to popular sector women's need for continuing education because of their limited access to formal education was seen in the multiple informal education programs they provided. These programs followed Freireian and feminist ideals, as I discussed above. Popular sector women's initial experiences in these programs were positive and, as I also indicated earlier, produced results similar to those discussed by Conway and Bourque 1993, Jaquette 1994, Jelin 1990 and Stromquist 1992.

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[7] Although not successfully promoted as such, the Quota Law is supposed to cover all decision-making positions in government, nominations, public and judicial administration, not just political elections.

With the worsening of Ecuador's economic and political crises in 1999, Quito's popular sector mestiza women changed their expectations of informal education. Meanwhile, the NGOs that sponsored informal education found themselves less able, and perhaps less willing, to provide it. The tight, rather hierarchical, relation between NGOs and popular sector mestiza women's organizations meant that problems on one side reflected upon the other. In consideration of theorists like Pateman and Waylen and the apparently worsening circumstances of popular sector mestiza women's organizations and NGOs, I still am pondering how popular sector women's activities in Quito affected city and State politics and women's future involvement in civil society. Below, I detail why economic changes from 1999 onward make it difficult to come to conclusions on these issues.

Due to renewed economic crisis, popular sector mestiza women's organizations desperately requested that informal education teach job skills or initiate income-producing projects, in addition to traditional seminars on human relations or woman's rights. Despite being fully aware of the benefits they provide, some veteran participants were reluctant to stay in their organizations if it did not provide some sort of income. Many women left organizations, even the country, to find work, greatly weakening women's organizations and community structures.[8] It became apparent that economic crisis could easily limit women's hard won freedom to participate outside of the home. Women said that husbands, partners and/or family needed economic support. For many women, "outside participation" shifted completely to the workforce because their husbands/partners felt non-income producing organization activities were a waste of time. Considering this reaction, it seemed that popular sector informal education systems had focused overmuch on women and had not successfully taught men that women's organization participation could produce multiple benefits for household and community.

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[8] Migration's impact is much more notable in Southern Ecuador. Quiteñas, however, commented on the increasing number of children in their barrios with a mother and/or a father abroad.

In addition to drawing old members away from the organization, veteran participants said that the economic situation caused people to become more individualistic and made it impossible to attract new participants to organizations unless there was money to be had. If the organization did have an income-producing project that drew new members, its veteran members complained about money conflicts produced by the project. They also talked about the struggle to make new members think beyond individual, material needs and realize the non-monetary, community benefits of organization participation.

To make things worse, an absence of results from the overthrow of Ecuador's president in January 2000 and the initiation of dollarization in spite of popular protest caused popular sector mestiza women to feel their politically inclined activities were futile. Hopes went up slightly during municipal elections in May 2000 when most political parties fulfilled the Quota Law for female candidates.[9] Unfortunately, very few women were elected nor did the political spotlight touch women's issues. Due to these circumstances, popular sector organizations, NGOS and other institutions promoting participation (of women or Ecuadorian people in general) as a way to strengthen civil society and Ecuadorian democracy took a hit. As Diamond (1996) points out, all the debates surrounding participation and civil society do not matter if democracy does not exist in the national context under discussion. Without democracy, civil society cannot benefit its members. Or, if I may apply Diamond to Ecuador and my interests, informal education and participation in civil society, whatever its form, will do women in poverty no good if the Ecuadorian government does not facilitate democracy by listening to civil society.

NGOs and coordinating entities of the Ecuadorian Women's Movement in Quito tried to respond to these economic and political needs to some extent. They were in the midst of an economic crisis themselves, however. While popular sector women's organizations were clamoring for more and more informal education, NGOs and coordinators had less time and

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[9] Parties needed to present a list of candidates including 20% women in the 2000 elections. For 2002 elections, the quota was 35%.

resources to give. Several international organizations and financing institutions had removed Ecuador from their list of priorities. The financers who maintained interest in Ecuador had only limited funds to give and were losing faith in Quito's NGOs and middle class coordinators. They demanded increased results. So, NGOs and coordinators reduced their staff and tried to develop activities that gave "more bang for the buck," meaning a focus on bigger spaces that might create bigger impact. For example, as a response to women's situation of political exclusion, one middle class coordinator decided to train women already in politics to be better politicians. The project had its benefits and was much needed by women politicians, but it also worked with a very limited number of individuals and overlooked the political education needs of popular sector women. Its limited reach and exclusion of popular sectors, in the end, did not please the project's financers and they denied further funding.

The NGO I volunteered with had almost completely withdrawn from popular sector mestiza women's organizations, explaining that they were very low on funds, that their fight for women's rights had matured and that they were in a process of change. They decided to focus on legal reforms and to limit their no-cost, thematic talks to once a month and to one location. In addition, they created a mixed-sex project that focused on citizenship and mini-businesses (*microempresas*) in order to promote popular sector political and economic rights – a project that had future, though not current, financing prospects. Unless they had previous women's organization experience, however, intense economic needs of project participants caused impatience with any discussion of gender or human relations during the course. Also, reduced NGO staff meant that there was rarely a person available to teach citizenship topics and that the course could only be offered in one location. While I was volunteering, these issues were altering the course content. True, the NGO was trying to respond to people's economic needs. On the other hand, it seemed like their gender equity ideology might be almost completely removed from the course to make it more appealing to future clients. With more clients, they

could sustain themselves in economic crisis and/or attract future local,[10] national or international financers.

The extreme reduction in informal education available to popular sector mestiza women had limited their ability to access it. Of the programs offered, many were too expensive for popular sector women or only happened during work hours. Without informal education and other forms of NGO assistance, mestiza women participating in popular sector organizations indicated that they felt abandoned and that their work was left half done. Several veteran participants opined that, now, NGOs and coordinators only called on popular sector women when they needed numbers for a protest or to prove to a financer that "x" project activity was successful.

The majority of participants I spoke with stressed that popular sector women's organizations were still needed to inform people of local and national problems, to fight against apathy and to encourage the population to demand its rights from the State. They said they had many great ideas and wanted to keep fighting but were unable to do what they wanted/needed on their own because of limited numbers and zero resources. They needed help writing and promoting projects for possible financers but found NGOs, their past allies, reluctant to provide this assistance at a price they could afford. This change in NGO attitude frustrated veteran participants because it inhibited organizations from obtaining resources and initiating projects. Without projects, new members saw no purpose to their participation and left organizations before realizing their benefits.

The current situation of Quito's NGOs and popular sector mestiza women's organizations also reflects Schild's 1998 argument. She warned that informal education programs would not be the ideal solution to popular sector women's social, economic and political exclusion. Her critique was based on that fact that informal education programs often have problems with low coverage, lack of continuity and vertical dependency (between promoter

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[10] In Quito's *cabildos*, people had expressed the need to generate employment. So, the city was eyeing mini-business education providers as a response to this need.

and popular women). Schild indicated how the bias many funding institutions have toward 'professional' organizations encourages these unequal relations by putting financial control in the hands of 'professional' (i.e., middle class) NGOs and state organizations. Financial control generally determines who controls information and leads to knowledge brokering and clientelism between the state, NGOs and grassroots organizations. In turn, knowledge brokering and clientelism tend to generate informal education that promotes traditional class and gender structures.

Applying Schild's argument to my study, you see that Quito's popular sector mestiza women's organizations were still dependent on NGOs and found they could only access NGO programming if they fit into the NGOs new focus clientele. The energy NGOs put into mini-business programs, despite the limited funding available for them, might encourage the State to take advantage of someone doing its job for free. NGO work under the poor conditions present during my investigation might also reproduce the idea that "poor" men and women only deserve "poor" programs to create businesses that will help them "get by."

Only one group of organizations, those who fell under the coordination of the Movimiento Nacional de Mujeres de Sectores Populares, out of the many popular sector mestiza women's organizations I visited seemed to reflect some of Schild's critical awareness. They also asked, like Pateman and Waylen, do you really want to be part of civil society, if it means following terms set by the dominant system? No, they responded. This group of popular sector women had learned through personal and organizational experience that you do not want to fight recklessly for the right to be part of the same system that has taught everyone, including yourself, to discriminate against what you represent. They commented that popular sector women could not let middle class women design projects for them or take their voice from them as their "representatives." Rather, they had to fight for their own voice and experience-based ideology in all of their activities. Only with this attitude did they feel they could approach civil society and demand inclusion in it.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES: BLACK WOMEN ON INFORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Black women's voices are not as numerous in my investigation as those of mestiza women, as I mentioned above. Their perspectives on and sentiments about informal education systems in Quito presented a critique, very rarely heard from mestiza women, of what NGOs promoted as "correct" for the majority of Quito's popular sector mestiza women. The organizational processes of popular sector Black women and the Pueblo Negro in general were different from those of popular sector mestiza women, in great part because of their strongly race and class marked experiences. Due to racial discrimination and its effects, the Pueblo Negro in Quito had always faced extreme economic exclusion and the situation was no different for their organizations. The processes they initiated were slow mostly because they infrequently received outside economic or technical assistance[11] and because their participants had to overcome educational, social and economic obstacles larger than those faced by most mestiza women. Considering that the Pueblo Negro in Quito had few to no resources to work with before, the most recent economic downturn seemed to have minimal impact on organizational activities. A few talks and ideas were shelved for later dates, but that was nothing to cause desperation. It also probably helped that Quito's *cabildo* project facilitated some Pueblo Negro activities, like *apalencamientos*, that had never before been supported from the "outside."

Both mestiza and Black women, I think, would agree that Black women participating within Pueblo Negro organizations had a limited presence within the Ecuadorian Women's Movement in Quito. Black women commented that advances by the Women's Movement had helped them to some extent, as they did most women in general. All the same, they preferred their autonomy when it came to dealing with gender issues because the Ecuadorian Women's Movement had demonstrated itself as not open to Black women's particular needs or issues in

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[11] The most consistent support of Pueblo Negro activities in Quito came from the Catholic Cambonian Missionaries. At the time of my investigation, the directive of Black Movement in Quito was undertaking a peaceful separation from this group. Some organizations within the Movement, however, had decided to maintain relations with the Cambonians.

the past. Also, because Black women's organizational efforts focused on the recovery and promotion of Afro-Ecuadorian culture through joint work between Black women and men, they tended to have stronger ties to the Black Movement entities that specialized in this kind of informal education.

Although the processes of the Black Movement and the women involved in it were slow, they made important advances, some of which I mentioned earlier. In the general population of Quito, they had increased awareness of Afro-Ecuadorian culture to some extent through dance, music and food festivals. Also, the Pueblo Negro obtained its own day of National recognition (the first Sunday in October). In 2001, they celebrated this day with marimba, sociodramas and an Afro-Ecuadorian Catholic mass at Quito's Museo de la Ciudad. Among Blacks participating in Pueblo Negro organizations, cultural knowledge deepened as had pride, especially in relation to what the Pueblo Negro contributed to Ecuador over the past centuries. In addition, joint work with Black men and women helped both sexes realize the value and importance of Black women and their labor to the household, the Pueblo Negro and Ecuador.

Through a mixed sex organizational process, Black men and women, youth and adults, shared critiques of the dominant system and the gender-related oppression they confronted within it. Using these critiques, Black organization leaders and organizers encouraged grassroots participants to work on constructive responses to their social and economic exclusion. To help inform these responses, Black adults engaged in informal, Afro-Ecuadorian ethnoeducation. Black youth, in some organizations, were encouraged to take part in their culture through music, dance and drama groups. Both groups were reminded of the importance of formal education. Education was seen and promoted as the way to get ahead, as a Black individual and as the Black community. As a direct result of these activities, more and more Black youth organization participants were finishing secondary school and, although never numerous, increasing numbers of them were attending university.

Unlike the majority of popular sector mestiza women, formal and informal education did not pass Black women without criticism. During conversations with me, Black women participants portrayed formal education as the "way out" for their children, but through personal experience and that of their children, they also realized that formal education taught Black children self-hate, cultural devaluation and corruption. Black women program designers, who also saw formal education as key to helping the Black population ahead, were critical too. They described formal education as the way dominant society taught Black children that education serves them no purpose, teaching them that "they'll only grow up to be maids or security guards."

To respond to everyday difficulties and to correct misguiding formal education, Black women grassroots participants and organization leaders, insisted on informal education programs that spoke to their specific needs – social and economic exclusion due to racial discrimination. According to them, the little NGO-supported informal education they received did not deal with these issues and sometimes reinforced them. For instance, one group of Black women described how an NGO-supported informal education program had abandoned them, with the course half done, for no apparent reason. The experience made them feel like "poor" Black women who were not worth the trouble of educating, even informally.

Some Black women organization leaders approached informal education in an integral fashion that speaks to bell hooks' Teaching to Transgress (1994). In this analysis, hooks talks about teachers and students teaching sharing knowledge that helps them live more fully in the world and be well as whole persons. To illustrate what I mean, one organization leader educated herself and taught participants their rights as well as where to go to file a complaint when they encountered discrimination. She made sure participants had ways to talk about and confront the effects of discrimination on an individual level without continuing to reject what provoked that discrimination – being Black. Since economic needs were also an important issue in her group, she also thought of ways organization activities could be profitable, cultural and educational. If

participants disagreed with her approach, she encouraged their questions and critiques, using them to teach herself and to improve the informal education provided to her organization.

These perspectives and activities indicate a critical consciousness that supports Freire's critique of formal education in Latin America (applicable to informal education) as well as the many studies that follow his example. In <u>Pedagogía del Oprimido</u> (1985), Freire discusses how the dominant classes in Latin America hold the reigns of power in the form of knowledge and its distribution, i.e. the formal/traditional education system and its pedagogy. His research demonstrates possible problems behind the promotio n of education as the way to produce better citizens and promotes pedagogy developed in conjunction with and contextualized within the opinions and needs of the group concerned.

Influenced by Freire, Luykx's (1999) study based in Bolivia also parallels Afro-Ecuadorian critiques of formal education in Quito. Luykx illustrates how schools play a role in process of identity formation, both national and individual. To make her point, she shows how mestizo, criollo and indigenous identities fit or do not fit into contemporary Bolivian national discourse through an examination of actual school practices and school-student discourse in a teacher training school. Interventions by dominant ideologies in schooling, according to Luykx's, are meant to create passive national subjects, but they can provoke "everyday resistance" from individuals and groups as well. She implies that "everyday resistance" might lead to larger-scale resistance and social change in the future. Black youth groups took the next step proposed in Luykx's analysis. They used dance, music and drama to direct "everyday resistance" into productive activities, like the production of Afro-Ecuadorian choreographies and sociodramas for public presentation that raised cultural awareness in Black youth performers as well as their audience.

Black women who had extensive organizational experience, both within and outside of the Pueblo Negro, usually took on mid-level organization activities or leadership positions. They varied in formal education, class standing, as well as in their approaches to what processes

and issues the Pueblo Negro needed to take on. As I only spoke to a few women with this degree of involvement, I cannot say that I know the full range of these approaches, just these women's perspectives and what I heard at Pueblo Negro round tables. What I came to understand was that the Federation of the Pueblo Negro and the Coordinator for Black Women usually aimed their activities at audiences like government institutions and "professional" individuals, while grassroots organization activities tended to focus internally. Unlike grassroots level organizations, mid-level entities had also received some outside financial assistance.

In terms of advances, Black women participating at the mid-level talked about negotiating Black inclusion at various levels of government. They mentioned getting members of the Black Movement into city and national government. In Quito, they had also successfully obtained public spaces for organizational meetings, Pueblo Negro discussions and cultural events. In addition, they pointed out progress in tough negotiations with city and national level government where they used the traditional political system and *palancas* to get newly developed Black "*políticas públicas*" recognized within city regulations and national legislation.

These *políticas públicas* were another mid-level advance and a response to current political trends that demanded everything be presented in terms of *políticas públicas*. Black Movement leaders based these *políticas públicas* on self-reflection into Black experiences in Quito, extensive research into Afro-Ecuadorian culture and ongoing Black organizational work with the recovery, strengthening and promotion of Afro-Ecuadorian cosmovision. Frustratingly, their fight for the inclusion of Black *políticas públicas* was also a fight for rights the State should have given them freely. For example, the State was supposed to provide all its citizens, especially those from specific ethnic/racial groups, an education that spoke to their particular needs. Yet, the Black population was fighting to receive State support for a curriculum based on Black history and cosmovision.

Despite these advances, Black women and men within Pueblo Negro organizations, especially those working at the mid-level, were concerned that Blacks might be seen as the last

and somewhat trendy, "other" for Quito and the Ecuadorian State. Due to previous experience, they worried that their negotiations and any agreements arrived upon with the State might only reflect electoral interest, giving a little to the Black population so as to look good and get more votes. This keen awareness of the need to warily negotiate with the State for their rights, rather than look to it for help, reflected Holston and Appadurai's (1999) study. In this analysis, the authors problematize traditional notions of citizenship, the relation between members of civil society and the state. Holston and Appadurai and the experience of Quito's Black residents, especially Black women, challenge the popular belief that democratic states guarantee citizens a set of rights specific to their contexts/needs. They demonstrate that, in reality, marginal groups find themselves granted rights that vary by their race, ethnicity and migrant status. One Black woman, whose words reflected the comments of others, spoke to Holston and Appadurai's argument when she said, "We don't have rights. We just take what they [government and dominant society] give us."

Beyond dealing with an adversarial State, Pueblo Negro organizations at all levels had their fair share of difficulties. Although these difficulties were similar to those faced by popular sector mestiza women's organizations, they met a different reaction from Black women organization participants and leaders. For example, Pueblo Negro organizations found it hard to get new members. Participants talked about having to fight individualism and disinterest in their Black neighbors so as to get them into organizations. A Black woman participant explained this by saying that Black people, in general, simply did not want to give their time for someone else's purposes, they wanted to resolve their personal situation and enjoy themselves first. She added that the economic situation did not help any. Another Black woman, this time a mid-level activist, felt this problem originated in hundreds of years of oppression that forcibly removed notions of community and working for the Black community from Black people. Dominant society had taught Blacks that working for the Black community will reinforce discrimination,

not confront it. Finally, another participant pointed out that few Blacks were willing to ponder the painful past of the Afro-Ecuadorian population so as to learn from it and confront it.

As with mestiza women's organizations, little communication between organizations caused setbacks and problems within Black organizations. Minimal financial and technical resources restricted the possibilities of forming a communication system. Partially because of this lack of communication, grassroots Black organizations distrusted the interests of mid-level Black coordinating entities. Many Black women participants commented that they had no idea what was going on within the Black women's coordinating office and felt that this office only communicated with them when it would make one of their projects look good. Furthermore, negative past experiences, where organizational ideas had been stolen and exploited by others, made Pueblo Negro organizations reluctant to open communications with "outside entities" and other organizations within the Black Movement.

Grassroots and mid-level Black women participants both stated that a large obstacle for the Black Movement in Quito was the absence of consensus on the Movement's general mission, objection and vision, a goal made difficult by communication and distrust issues. For grassroots women participants, this made it hard to promote organization participation to their neighbors because they could not clearly express the larger fight their smaller activities fed into. At the mid-level, Black women felt that a lack of consensus made it impossible to negotiate programs based on Pueblo Negro ideologies with potential financers and caus ed extreme frustration and demotivation in Black leaders.

As an optimistic but realistic response to the challenges faced by Pueblo Negro organizations, one Black woman (a mid-level activist and organization leader) said, "We still are falling backwards, but at least not as fast as we used to be." She and other Black women from different levels of Pueblo Negro organizations told me that they motivated their participation in hard times with the belief that slow processes and doing things "their way" were the only means to build toward real change and were, therefore, worth the current trouble. "During slow

processes," explained a different Black woman organization leader, "you have the time to ponder, assimilate and truly internalize the fight you have gotten yourself into before you move onto the next step. Fast processes and rapid responses, on the other hand, only bring superficial results that do not last."

AS A MANNER OF CONCLUSION

Like Black women organization participants, popular sector mestiza women in organizations expressed a belief in "slow but sure" or doing things "bit by bit," as indicated above. In both groups, I saw this belief help them deal with the set backs their organizations faced and articulate the time it takes for cultural change to occur. Yet, bearing in mind the desperate reaction of many mestiza women's organizations to Ecuador's most recent economic downturn, I am inclined to think that this belief had only been lived by Black organizations and the women participating within them. As I said above, Black organizations almost never had outside financial assistance and technical support. All the same, they continued onward in their activities over the past twenty years, motivated by the idea that clarifying and strengthening their beliefs and acting along them was the only chance for real, lasting change. Meanwhile, recent reductions in outside financing appeared to have caused the activities of popular sector mestiza women's organizations and NGOs to reach a near standstill in very little time.

Despite fifteen years of experience and informal education, the limited ability of popular sector mestiza women to continue their fight apart from NGOs indicates, to me, that the informal education these women received was missing something. From this initial consideration of the different ways popular sector mestiza and Black women perceive informal education in times of crisis, I would say that the informal education promoted by most NGOs pushed popular sector mestiza women into rapid change without taking the time to build foundations. NGOs had to work fast, while project money (and monetary motivation) lasted, and made mistakes in the process. They had a tremendous impact on popular sector mestiza women's life conditions,

changing lives and laws and making them dream about a new society. They did not take the time, however, to give popular sector mestiza women all of the tools necessary to fulfill those dreams, continue them and incorporate others.

Looking back on the past, NGO workers said, basically, "Those were the days." Meanwhile popular sector mestiza women in organizations looked ahead and cried "How will we ever make it on our own?" These responses make me wonder if NGOs considered the consequences of increased inclusion in political and civil societies for popular sector mestiza women. They also cause me question how much of a role popular sector mestiza women in organizations had in the critical analysis, negotiation and use of their inclusion. Returning to Schild and hooks ideas, you could say that NGOs only told half the story about how to live inclusion fully in order to save time and money. Willingly or not, I cannot say, by telling only half the story NGOs reproduced professional-uneducated, middle class-popular dichotomies (Schild) with this act. They also created cruel dreams of social justice by teaching popular sector women about equality but failing to show them how to negotiate and live inclusion fully (hooks) in the unjust city of Quito.

Unlike popular sector mestiza women, Black women within Pueblo Negro organizations had to learn how to negotiate inclusion on their own terms. Organization leaders encouraged them to join the fight for Afro-Ecuadorian inclusion, but no one made learning easy for them and very few people could help them find the way. Their challenging and painful daily experiences, marked by gender, class and racial exclusion, created critical awareness and caused them to not take anything at face value. They went slowly and questioned every step, but through this process, they felt that they obtained important knowledge. This knowledge, they believed, would help them continue to fight for inclusion as well as teach themselves and other Afro-Ecuadorians how to live inclusion fully and on their terms.

At the time my investigation ended, popular sector mestiza women were entering a difficult process of adaptation caused by the withdrawal of NGOs and the disappearance of

external funding for organization activities. I wonder if this experience will cause their approaches to informal education to parallel those of the Pueblo Negro. Will they successfully build upon the few tools NGO informal education provided them and continue their fight for inclusion in political and civil societies? Or, did NGO informal education produce only superficial and temporal effects, meaning that the role of popular sector mestiza women's organizations in Ecuador's Women's Movement was only a passing trend?

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