

THE NEW IMMIGRATION FROM SUB SAHARAN AFRICA IN ARGENTINA. ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE INCREASING VISIBILIZATION PROCESS OF THE LOCAL AFRO DESCENDANT COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

The Cape Verdeans were the main immigrant contingents arriving in Argentina from the Sub Saharan Africa, between the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Since around the 1990s, immigrants began to arrive from different countries of that region (Senegalese, Nigerian, Congolese, Ghanaian, among others), increasing since the year 2000. This paper aims, **firstly**, to characterize this new migration taking into account: tendencies and patters of the mentioned African region: the migratory policies increasingly restrictive of the main “Northern” countries, and especially, the political, economic and migratory changes in Argentina taking place in the last two decades. **Secondly**, our purpose it to analyze the role that these immigrants play in the formation and recreation of social spaces together with other Africans already living in the country and with Afro descendants, as regards the increasing process of visibilization and fight for citizens’ rights that is being carried out in Argentina.

KEYWORDS: Sub Saharan immigrants. Afro descendants. Visibilization. Argentina. Citizenship.

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MIGRATION IN AND FROM THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

The external pressures imposed to the development strategies of the African countries – “the irrational policies of post colonial development” (Mbuyi Kabunda, 2000) –, impact on their political, socio-cultural and economic organization, and this, at the same time, influences on the intra and extra continental migrations. When modifying the structure of opportunities of a country, in general the rhythm and direction of the responsible migrations are modified, directly or indirectly, for instance, of the rural exodus when neglecting the agricultural zones boosting the displacement towards cities.

As regards the causes of both sorts of migrations, the Nigerian economist Aderanti Adepaju (1984) considers that they both come from a same main group. The internal migration occurs in response to unbalances among the different regions of a country and its prevailing direction is determined by the implantation of projects creating employment. Something similar happens with the international migration: inequalities in the development, job opportunities, and especially, life and income conditions motivate these movements. However, the reasons are not exclusively economic. The political factors are usually more important; for instance, some States have tried to readjust the arbitrary borders traced by the colonial administration, which divided the homogeneous ethnical groups, bringing about wars between countries and pushing away hundreds of refugees and displaced people in search of individual and collective security, such as the cases of Somalia, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Cameroon (Adepaju, 2007).

Both Kabunda (2006, 2007) and Adepaju (2007), as well as experts participating in the International Forum about Migrations and Human Rights held in Lisbon in 2007, highlighted that the African immigration is more intra-continental or horizontal rather than extra-continental.

In 2000, the International Organization for Migrations (OIM) already forecast a substantial increase in the emigration/immigration of Africans, especially from the Sub Saharan Africa, towards destinations outside Africa due to the fact that the prospects

and possibilities for the internal migrations were increasingly limited, leading to a situation of generalized poverty and economic uncertainty.

And in 2010, such organization in its Annual Report pointed out that Africa continued being a continent with a steady dynamics of international immigration, since “Conflicts, income inequalities and the climatic change result in very low levels of human security, these factors act as a driving force, urging people to travel from their countries of origin” (2010:131). We agree with the authors and consulted sources in the sense that we observe an increase in the complexity of the African migratory phenomenon resulting in new tendencies: there are more destinations, the distances are longer (in several stages), increasingly more women migrate, the number of workers highly qualified from the middle class of cities becomes relevant in the migrations for work. (Maffia, 2011).

THE PARTICULAR CASE OF THE SUB SAHARAN AFRICA MIGRATIONS

As regards the migration from Sub Saharan Africa in particular, Adepoju (2006, 2007) considers a regional scenery of deep contradictions: on one hand, rich in resources and on the other, the poorest of all regions. Civil wars and political destabilization have severely lessened the possibilities of development in the decades of post independence. Nowadays, it is in disadvantage facing globalization and economy restructuring.

Among the several factors that shape the tendencies and patterns of this region, Adepoju points out: a fast growth of population and of labor force, unstable policies, increasing ethnical conflicts, fall or overthrow of the governments whose roots are in the unstable processes of democratization, persistent economic decline and downsizing of the public sector workers in response to measures of structural adjustment and poverty, without leaving aside the importance of the environment deterioration; increasing desertification of the cultivable lands, the low price of *commodities* and the subsidies from rich countries to some crops such as cotton, forced many farmers to emigrate.

The successive political and economic crisis have triggered migratory currents towards new destinations, towards countries with which they did not have previous ties (historical, political or economic), increasing the size and effects. Moreover the youngsters, both men and women, do not perceive a future either at short or medium term. Single or married women now migrate independently to rich countries in search of a safe job, as a survival strategy for increasing the income of the family group, thus redefining the gender roles inside the family and society (Adepoju, 2004, 2006, 2007).

SOME CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE MIGRATORY POLICIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Besides, these migratory flows towards the South Cone should be associated with what happens in the Northern hemisphere, especially in Europe, about migratory policies. The migrants or potential migrants have faced an increase of legal limitations, a complexity of controls in the European space that has been “turning into a real fortress for the candidates to leave” (Regis Minvielle, 2010:1). Although, as Adepoju (2007) states, it is not a total closing of doors, they are opened selectively for those of better qualifications, with great losses for the countries of origin (“brain drain”).

It is interesting the analysis made by Cyril Obi about the appearance of a discourse on the threat of the transglobal security, discourse that has been increased since September 11th (2001). Smith (2000) identifies the transnational threats to security of the developed countries as crime, terrorism, migratory flows, diseases and pandemics, environmental degradation and climatic change. Obi (2010), taking Smith as reference, points out that in the discourse of global security made by hegemonic countries, based on fear manipulation, African “illegal”, “irregular” migration is seen as a “source of transnational threat”. The African continent is transformed in a securitization object.

The Schengen space represents a territory where the free circulation of people was guaranteed, extended to almost all the

States members of the European community and other associated countries. Today, a vast majority of those countries, concerned by the “irregular immigrant penetration” through some of the most porous borders, support the reintroduction of internal border controls at least temporarily.

In Spain and Italy – two of the main entrance gates to countries of the European Union – the possibilities of entering have been increasingly more limited, with measures such as the Return Directive, agreement approved by the European Parliament on 18th June, 2008. And with the recent economic-financial European crisis, the control measures have become even tougher, in some cases with the support of the African countries that cooperate in the exit control of their population associated to “co-development” programs.

According to the authorities of the European Agency of Foreign Borders (Frontex), due to this pressure the immigrants change strategies; they choose other ways of access and other means for arriving. And, about new destinations, we add South America, in particular, Brazil and Argentina (Maffia, 2010 y 2011).

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN CHANGES AS REGARDS MIGRATION IN ARGENTINA IN THE LAST TWO DECADES

The encouragement of immigration in Argentina taking place since mid nineteenth century can be mainly associated to the ideas of modernity, present in some of the intellectuals and governors of that period. The legal frame was the National Constitution of 1853 (especially the Article 25) and the instrument was the first National Law of Immigration and Colonization, called “Avellaneda Law” No 817 of year 1876 in force until 1981, replaced by law No 22,439 – “Videla Law” of the military dictatorship (1976-1983), in force until 2004 when the law No 25,871 was promulgated during President Nestor Kirchner’s government.

In the frame of Avellaneda Law, the mass immigration recorded between 1880 and 1930 was regulated, not without contradictions and ambiguities. In general terms, we can say that the difficult situation in Europe between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century (First World

War) resulted in an expulsion factor of its population. Argentina, having a prosperity period, with an agro exporter scheme, became an attractive country for immigrants, mainly Europeans. The 1930 crisis marked the end of a stage. As regards the migratory regulations, more strict restrictions were established, emphasizing the decline of the migratory flow that had begun in 1914. The economic situation in Argentina and the decrease in the transoceanic migratory offer, instead of the restrictions, were the causes of the flow decrease, according to historian Fernando Devoto (2003).

After 1945, a new flow of European migrants and other nationalities abandoned their homeland when the Second World War finished and came to Argentina; also the refugees arrived.

When the history of Argentinean migration is studied, it is observed a series of fluctuations: the admission and permanence regimes vary, from gates almost wide open to the expulsion and amnesties. What seems a constant is the choice, sometimes explicit in the regulations, sometimes implicit in the administrative practices that classify and qualify who can enter, reside, work, live in Argentina, who is wanted and who is not.

The 1990s marked the beginning of a small flow of Sub Saharan African immigrants, which elapsed during the two periods of President Carlos Menem's government (1989-1999). In those years, despite being a democratic government, the migratory law in force still was the so-called Videla Law (No 22,439) and the policy about migration was still clearly restrictive. Decrees stipulating to maximize the controls for giving residence were passed, joint operations of the Department of Internal Affairs and the Sub secretariat of Internal Security about the control of the legal situation of immigrants all over the country and new admission criteria were established (Novick, 2000). However, the chaotic and inefficient practices of the administrative bodies (Devoto, 2001) and the so-called porosity of our borders, that is, the possibility of avoiding controls, allowed the entrance to the country of immigrants without great difficulties (Maffia, 2010b).

On economic matters, as Jelin (2006:48) states, "in the last two decades, with temporary reversions due to devaluations and situations of economic crisis, Argentina was still an attraction pole

in the South Cone, as well as a destination of Asiatic immigrant groups, especially Koreans and Chinese”. In addition, we could add an incipient immigration from the Sub Saharan Africa.

By the mid 90s, initiatives for modifying the law of the military government began and the debates continued around the contents that should support a new migratory law. This was presented by National Senator Rubén Giustiniani in 2001 and 2003 and it was promulgated in 2004, during the presidency of Nestor Kirchner (2003-2007) under No 25,871.

However, we agreed with Jelin that “even though the new law is opener, the amount of proceedings and required documentation, and also their high costs, are still an often insurmountable obstacle” (2006:64) for any migrant of few resources (Maffia, 2010b). The law was regulated six years later, during the government of President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and although the recognition to migration as Human Right has been a very important step, the access to residence for the migrants not coming from member countries or countries associated to MERCOSUR is still a problem. Regarding this, Ceriani Cernadas and Morales (2011) point out that this has to do, among other things, with certain practices adopted by the National Department of Migrations, such as, for instance, asking the certificate of entry to the country for beginning the residence proceeding.

Some African immigrants with a high educational capital and with a residence of more than a decade in Argentina, think that the immigration in Argentina is a selective one and that the new Constitution (1994) was not updated in that sense, still being the European immigration the favorite one and that is why “many Africans have not come”.

SUB SAHARAN IMMIGRANTS IN ARGENTINA

Cape Verdeans

The Cape Verdean migration towards Argentina began at the end of the nineteenth century, becoming relevant since the 1920s, with the presence of small groups or individuals coming, most of

them, from Santo Antão and São Vicente; and São Nicolau, Fogo and Brava, to a lesser extent. Other periods of greater convergence were between 1927 and 1933 and a third one after 1946, decreasing in intensity around the 70s, period which coincides with the increase of the migratory flow of Cape Verdeans to Portugal (Maffia, 2010).

Those who migrated before the Independence of Cape Verde in 1975 had Portuguese nationality, some of them kept it but the great majority processed a new Cape Verdean documentation (passport) and are naturalized Argentinean citizens.

As a mirror situation of the phenomenon of associative-mutualist entrepreneurships of the great immigrant communities settled in Argentina, the Cape Verdeans founded two associations: the Mutual Aid Society of Ensenada in 1927 and the Cape Verdean Union of Dock Sud in 1932, which had the aim of covering the functional needs regarding employment, accommodation, recreation and general cultural expressions. The places where these associations were established could be categorized, taking Mónica Mc Goldrick's concept (1982), as "ethnic neighborhoods": spaces where some aspects of the original sociability are restored and constitute a starting point for being inserted in the different nets of the migratory process.

The "old Cape Verdeans" built an image of themselves as Portuguese, far from the "other Africans", following the model built by several generations in Cape Verde. Even though they tried to join, at least nominally, the Portuguese segment of population, in fact, very few of them were accepted in these spheres of sociability. As regards Greenfield's adaptive strategies (1976), it could be talked, at the beginnings, about a not very successful Cape Verdean-Portuguese strategy for the majority before the local Portuguese community, since like in the USA, they were not accepted as one of their own. And we distinguish a "Cape Verdean-Argentinean" strategy. This strategy constituted by diverse practices led to the invisibility of the group, possibly with the conscious or unconscious aim of achieving their insertion and social reproduction with the least conflict possible. That results from their historic experience and from the dynamics established by the group with the host society, who has denied the presence of black people in Argentina from practice and

discourse. Ilke B. Leite (1996:41) calls it whitening-invisibilization dynamics. This has its roots in the Cape Verdean past but grows and survives in contexts where invisibility is processed by giving a look in which the black is seen as non-existing. (Maffia, 2010)

Nowadays, this process is being reverted by small groups of youngsters of second and third generation that, together with other minorities of Afro descendants and some Africans, exacerbate the criticism to exclusion and to invisibility, vindicating their origins and Diaspora affiliations. We could consider it as part of a new strategy that could be called “Afro Diaspora”, built on the basis of necessary alliances, focused on the struggle against discrimination and racism and the conquer of full citizen rights.

The new Sub Saharan immigrants

Since around the 1990s, increasing by 2000, Senegalese, Nigerians, Ghanaians, Guineans, Cameroonians, Congolese, Malians and Ivoirians, among others, have begun to be visibilized by the local inhabitants in different geographical, social, cultural and working spaces.

The lack of work or dissatisfaction with the job they had, limited prospects for professional development and expectations of improving their life conditions, and also the conditions of their family group, and, in some cases, political persecutions, were the main motivations when it came to emigrate. These decisions in general received the support of all or some members of the family (mother and/or father, siblings, uncles and aunts) (Maffia, et.al., 2012).

In the National Census of Argentina in 2001, 1,883 Africans were recorded, from whom about 51% came from a Sub Saharan country such as Senegal, Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, Ivory Coast, among others. In the recent National Census in 2010, 2,738 Africans were recorded out of a total amount of 1,805,957 recorded foreigners; the Africans only represented 0.15%.

In the following table, we show the distribution by province and in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA), ex federal capital of Argentina.

TABLE 1

**Argentina. Foreign population born in Africa by province
and Autonomous City of Buenos Aires
(in number of people)**

Region	Individuals
Total country	2.738
Autonomous City of Buenos Aires	1.176
Buenos Aires	839
Córdoba	143
Entre Ríos	82
Mendoza	77
Santa Fe	70
Salta	50
Río Negro	42
Neuquén	38
Chubut	26
Corrientes	23
San Juan	21
La Pampa	18
Tucumán	18
Catamarca	17
Misiones	16
Santa Cruz	14
Chaco	12
Tierra del Fuego	10
La Rioja	9
San Luis	9
Formosa	6
Jujuy	6

Source: Personal compilation based on data consulted in the National Institute of Statistics and Census (2010).

So far, the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INDEC) has not released information separated by countries, thus it is not possible to indicate how many correspond to Sub Saharan Africa.

Besides, members of the different immigrant associations estimate that between 4,000 and 5,000 Africans¹ live in the country, though they point out that it is difficult to establish an exact amount, especially due to the intense mobility, since some of them stay in the country during a short period and then they migrate again, while new immigrants arrive. Out of the mentioned amount, the interviewees calculate that around 3,000 come from Senegal and 1,000 from Nigeria, followed by smaller groups of Ghanaians, Cameroonians, Guineans, Congolese and Ivoirians (Maffia, 2011).

The data of the National Department of Migrations are not very accurate either, since many Africans present an irregular migratory status, therefore they do not appear in the records. Even though the new law guarantees that the irregular migratory condition will not hinder the access to main rights, its application does not prevent the creation of irregular residents (Courtis y Pacceca, 2007). This particular situation affects many Sub Saharan Africans, that is why in several cases, the refuge application represents the only way of having access to the condition of regularity (Maffia, et.al., 2012).

Even though the communication media insist on pointing out that most Sub Saharans come directly from their countries of origin travelling as stowaways in cargoes, the information gathered so far either from the immigrants themselves or by the officials of different areas, coincides in pointing out that most of them arrive or have arrived by land from neighboring countries, mainly Brazil², Bolivia and Paraguay and, by air, directly to Argentina. Some of them entered with tourist visa, others irregularly through the most porous borders, a significant amount asked for refuge and some youngsters arrived by ship, also irregularly.

Most Sub Saharan Africans are males between 20 and 40 years old who live in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires and neighboring localities such as Moron, Avellaneda, Florencio Varela and La Plata; although there are also smaller groups living in other cities of the country like Rosario, Cordoba or Mendoza. Some are

single; others have formed a couple in Argentina or have wives and children in their homeland. The same happens in the case of the few African women who are in Argentina, since some traveled with their husbands or later met them, but other migrants came single.

Their working activities are varied³: teaching dances, African music and languages, teaching activity at tertiary and university level, footballers, waiters, factory, shop or hotel employees, owners of restaurants, bars or shops, telephone booths, taxis; however, the most visible activity is hawking trinket, clothes and accessories on the streets. That is why, from December to March (summer season in Argentina), many of them often travel towards the tourist places of the Atlantic coast and during the rest of the year they occasionally travel for selling in festivities or fairs held in the interior of the country. As it can be observed in the table inserted above, the number of Africans in the provinces (except for Buenos Aires) is very insignificant, they live there for a short time, depending on the working possibilities and conditions they can find. At the moment, we do not have job record in the rural areas; most of them stay in the main cities performing independent activities in the aforementioned hawking.

Yet without statistical support, we could point out with caution, that within the Argentinean labor market, there is some demand for the new African immigrants: in gastronomy and tourism; in the construction sector, but with great difficulties for making contracts with workers who are not in order (“in white” as it is commonly said); in the call-centers because of their language skills (French and English) and in the advertising sector.

In short we could say that even though they are still having difficulties for being inserted in the labor market of our country, moreover those who do not have either the necessary qualifications or the required documentation, even so – our interviewees say-, the possibilities that Argentina offers are better than those found in Brazil, transit country for most of them, or than in their own countries.

Finally, and answering in part to similar needs to those that encouraged the creation of other immigrant associations like those of the first Cape Verdeans, of supportive activities facing

difficulties of all sorts (economic, sanitary, housing, religious and ritual, social and cultural, etc.), since around the mid 1990s, these new immigrants have begun to organize themselves in associations, either religious or secular. Some of them are: the Nigerian in 1996, the Africans of the South Cone in 2002, and the Senegalese in 2007. They have also begun participating in others of mixed nature as we will see further on.

ABOUT THE AFRO DESCENDANTS IN AND FROM ARGENTINA

The history of the Afro Argentineans from Buenos Aires in the twentieth century has been of continuous demographic decline.

According to Reid Andrews (1989), the disappearance of the community of African origin was a disappearance only in the sense that the Afro Argentineans became almost invisible in the ethnic mixture of the city, reducing their number up to insignificance compared to the flow of Italians, Spaniards, Jews and other Europeans that arrived into town since the end of the nineteenth century and with higher intensity in the first decades of the twentieth century.

The idea of an Argentina with a homogeneous and white population, lacking plurality, forms part of the social imagery of the country since the beginnings of the gestation process of the nation. Rita Segato (2007) suggests that the homogeneity was a necessary requirement for basing citizenship on universal assumptions and she mentions the “Argentinean ethnical horror”, which produced a deliberate political will for eliminating any ethnic feature, pressing the ethnically marked people to change their origin categories through formal and informal mechanisms of persuasion, distortion and even extermination. In reference to Africans and their descendants, she adds that “the disappearance of the black in Argentina was ideological, cultural and literally built rather than purely demographical [...] his presence was first excluded of the official representation that the nation gave to itself” (Segato 2007:255) . And together with that dominant narrative of nation

that emphasizes the whiteness, a system of racial classification that routinely invisibilizes the blacks is constituted.⁴

We agree with Frigerio and Lamborghini (2011) in that, either in the past or in the present, it is not possible to talk “of an Afro Argentinean community” since it would mean to homogenize a rather heterogeneous population that *always* has been affected by cleavages of gender, color, class, nationality or social condition. That is why it is difficult to grasp conceptually that collective affected not only by several tensions and conflicts of a great dynamism and diversity but also by the temporary nature of their groups, associations and identifications.

The referred authors describe the process of development of what they characterize as “an incipient Afro social movement (Argentinean/descendant) in the country” (Frigerio y Lamborghini, 2011:27) distinguishing a series of stages since 1996 until now, characterized by the prevalence of determined categories of collective identification (*Afro Argentineans or black, Afro descendants, African Diaspora*), displayed strategically by the black militants in their attempts for interpellating the society and the State and by the kind of international agents or state organisms that help them in each case. Of the mentioned stages, we are interested in making reference to that characterized by the identifying category of “African Diaspora in/of Argentina” that does not suppress the use of the previous ones. This category allowed adding the Africans to the Afro Argentineans and Afro descendants of diverse origins, and this enabled adding greater visibility to Afros in Argentina and also made possible, in some way, that some African embassies –mainly that of South Africa- supported part of the activities that the organizations performed.

The most active participation of the Africans and their growing relevance were evidenced after the organization of the African Week in 2007, event that had been taking place since 2004 by African immigrants. This time it also included Afro Argentineans among the organizers and Afro American cultural workers in its program for the first time, under the name: “The African Diaspora in Argentina”.

AFRICANS AND AFRODESCENDANTS STRUGGLING FOR THE RECOGNITION OF RIGHTS

Regarding the Afro populations in Latin America and the Caribbean, Hoffmann (2010) considers that their significant invisibilization in some national imageries began to be reverted between the 1980s and 1990s, as a result of the confluence of national and international factors, being visibilized to different degrees and through diverse organizational forms, being grouped rather dispersedly at the beginning around struggles against discrimination and racism, cultural vindications, land demands or access to health and education. In Argentina, we find a background of this process in actions that we could categorize as specific in relation to national factors but, moreover, international ones. The activism of the 1980s is more linked with the process of African decolonization (López, 2005).

One is the case of the Cape Verdean Joaquim Jose Dos Santos, nicknamed “Tchutche”, immigrated to Argentina in the 1940s. He created, together with a group of compatriots in the province of Buenos Aires, a regional committee of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC), founded in 1956 by Amilcar Cabral, with the aim of spreading and struggling from Argentina for the Independence of Cape Verde against the Portuguese colonialism.⁶

The fight led by “Tchutche” had a strong rejection from most Cape Verdeans living in Argentina, who did not want to sever ties with Portugal, situation that later began to be slowly reverted but that evidenced the difficulties the group had for building a unified collective social identity. An old Cape Verdean stated as follows:

With the Independence, many were happy and others were not, like everywhere, others felt deeply rooted with Portugal... now they do agree in the course of time

The tensions have been also political and ethnic, since the ethnic identity was a political positioning. But the Argentinean situation of that time favored not taking decisions as regards identities, since the pro-independence discourse was silenced as

it was the previous⁷ stage to the military dictatorship of 1976, coinciding with the leading dictatorship in Portugal.

The internal struggles in the local Cape Verdean community itself, even though they continued, they blurred – among other reasons – with the generational change.

Miriam Gomes, daughter of a Cape Verdean immigrant, was one of the heirs of “Tchutche”’s ideas, who put into practice a renewed militancy whose one of the main objectives was to achieve visibilization and recognition of the Afro presence by the society. She is one of the first militants that began to establish ties with the new African immigrants.

By the 1980s, another African of Nigerian origin, Obadiah Oghoerore Alegbe, emigrated in 1977, with university studies in an Argentinean engineering school, began to militate politically getting in contact with the two main political parties of the country:

[...] at university I was very strong in political activism, I was executive president of the Argentinean Committee for Namibia Independence and the Apartheid repression, so in order to have the effects in the campaign in Argentina there was support of some legislators [...] for 5 years I was advisor in international politics of the Chamber of Deputies of the Argentinean Nation, I was one year in the Peronist bloc and then I passed to the radical bloc for 4 years, I organized 2 international conferences about the apartheid here [...] so I managed to know Argentina well from the political point of view

In 1982, Obadiah founded, together with two Congolese and four Afro descendants (three Afro Uruguayans and one Afro Argentinean of Santiago del Estero province), a group called Bondeko, which lasted about two years, and from there they began the task of spreading and clarification.

He continues with a less active political stage, until in the 1990s he founded the Association of Nigerians of the La Plata River. From that own space, he kept ties with other Nigerians and Africans of the world through social nets and a permanent connection with the local Embassy of his country. He was one of the most critical Africans as regards Afro Argentineans and Afro descendants; he perceived a significant fragmentation, a constant

appeal to the complaint, and little or null political participation which would result in the reversion of the situation. Due to this, he hardly participated of the activities they organized.

Another relevant figure in that growing activism of Argentina in the 1980s – activism arisen as part of the democratization process and also of the socio-political transformations that by that time were taking place in Argentina – was Enrique Nadal, Afro Argentinean intellectual and activist (deceased in 2008), who founded The Argentinean and Latin American Committee Against Apartheid in 1986. In an attempt to approach, Enrique was invited to the Bondeko organization but they did not agree and each one followed his way.

Enrique Nadal, contributed with his experience to form the militant capital of two Afro Argentineans: Miriam Gomes and Lucia Molina, Afro Argentinean from Santa Fe province, president of the House of Indo-Afro American Culture of Santa Fe “Mario Lopez”.⁸

It is exactly in the 90s when – according to De Piero (2005) - there appeared a new kind of civil society; new social actors arose, with a renewed dynamics, especially from the changes in the relation State/Society. Under those “new winds” some of the objectives of these organizations of the civil society began to change, as for instance, the immigrant associations, tending to a greater political participation, beginning to fight for their rights, creating spaces for the development of a critical thinking.

Such is the case of the above mentioned Miriam Gomes, when in 1999 said: “the Cape Verdean community of Argentina has not become integrated into the rest of the Afro Argentinean community, remaining as a separate group. As a black minority it has suffered the same determinants as the other”. And in further statements, she expressed that for reverting this situation it would be necessary “to re-Africanize the spirits”, to become visible together with other minorities (Africans and descendants) or like other minorities (for instance, the indigenous people) and join the fight for vindicating their full rights as citizens.

As part of that new strategy, in 2008 Miriam Gomes, from the Cape Verdean Union of Dock Sud and with the participation

of other organizations and some African immigrants, presented a project to the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for the Development (AECID) called Support to the Afro Argentinean population and their community-based organizations and achieved an important financial support. Under the motto “Presence, conscience, pride and culture”, they performed seminars about African and Afro American culture, training and labor insertion workshops mainly aimed at youngsters and two large festivals: Black Argentina and the Second Black Argentinean Festival.

Regards the topics about Afro descent, discrimination and racism, we agree with Frigerio and Lamborghini (2011:34) on the fact that “in the last two years the amount of organisms that incorporated the Afro descendant issues in their schedules and actions was relatively widened [...] and more and more it is mentioned the need of “affirmative public policies/actions” for the Afro descendant and African population.”

For the case of immigrants, the State⁹ has been giving answers to some of the problems in the last years – moreover since the new migration law – however, there are many more to solve, such as those about the procedure for African residence, particularly of Senegalese immigrants.

Since around mid 2010, several organizations of human right defense and of migrant support such as the clinic formed by: Buenos Aires National University, Commission of Support to the Refugee (CAREF), Center of Legal and Social Studies (CELS), the Pastoral of Migrations, the Collective for diversity (COPADI), the Nation Advocacy, National University of Lujan, the Argentinean Institute for Equality, Diversity and Integration (IARPIDI)¹⁰, the representatives of Haitian and Dominican groups and members of Amnesty International (the most recent ones), have been organizing meetings whose objective is to achieve the migratory regularization of the extra MERCOSUR migrants. At this moment they are centered on the Senegalese problems, talking with organisms such as the National department of Migrations and the Argentinean Foreign Office. The latter is in contact with the Senegalese embassy in Brasilia trying to create a consulate in the country that could optimize the resolution of many of the problems the Senegalese immigrants

living in Argentina have. Thus, the CSOs, through certain alliances manage to have the necessary strength for interpellating the State and thus obtaining some solutions to their demands.

The main State organisms working in some measures that try to achieve or to improve the immigrant integration in different spaces, apart from the mentioned National Department of Immigration (DNM), are the National Institute Against Discrimination (INADI); General Advocacy of the Nation and some provincial advocacies; the Foreign Office; the National Commission for Refugees CONARE that recently signed an agreement with the Employment Secretariat of the Labor Ministry of the Nation.

In spite of these advances, we consider that there is still a long ground to cover between the “public policies in paper” and the public policies actually performed.

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- 1 This difference is due in part to the sub-record of many foreigners that for several reasons – among them the fear for being undocumented – were not surveyed.
 - 2 In the Senegalese case, for instance, until 2009 the migrants could easily obtain a tourist visa to Brazil – this country has diplomatic representation in Senegal – and then enter Argentina irregularly.
 - 3 For the time being, there are not statistics about that.
 - 4 For further information about this issue see: López (2005); Frigerio (2006) and Frigerio and Lamborghini (2011).
 - 5 The former is referred to enslaved descendants of Argentina and the latter is associated to the proposal presented in the Citizen Conference against Racism, Xenophobia and Intolerance in Santiago de Chile in 2000, term that became popular after the Third World Conference of Durban, South Africa in 2011, favoring the identification of black militants of different national origin in Argentina (Afro Uruguayans, Afro Brazilians, Afro Ecuadorians, Afro Peruvians, Afro Cubans). For further information about this issue see Frigerio and Lamborghini (2011).
 - 6 Later, under the government of Cape Verde president Aristides Pereira, Joaquim do Santos was appointed as first Honorary Consul in Argentina.
 - 7 In the government of Isabel Martinez de Peron (started in 1974 and overthrown by the military coup of 1976) where parapolice groups actively operated such as the Triple A, who controlled and investigated all the activities by any person, group or institution that could be suspected of “subverting the established order.
 - 8 For further details see Maffia and Ceirano (2007) and Maffia and Zubrycki (2011).
 - 9 The categories used in government documents to refer to the African immigrants are: African migrants or immigrants, migrants of African origin or refugees, according to the cases. So far, they have not been referred to in another way.
 - 10 Directed by a Congolese.

