



**UNIVERSAL POLITICS:
NEO-PENTECOSTALISM, CANDOMBLÉ,
AND POLITICS OF SPACE/RACE**

Rachel Cantave

Ph.D. candidate at the American University in Washington, D.C. *E-mail:* rachcantave@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

With an acute awareness across the globe of widening economic inequalities and an increasingly elusive middle class, where do religious institutions fit into the modern social and political ideologies? Examining interviews and ethnographic notes from data compiled in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, I will seek to answer two main questions: First, how does the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God fit (or not) into the neoliberal agenda/ideology? Second, how does the Afro-Brazilian religion *Candomblé* fit (or not) into the neoliberal model? Comparing the socio-cultural and symbolic alignments of neo-Pentecostalism and *Candomblé* and how each religion favors different types of political subject formation in regard to space and racial consciousness, I conclude by remarking on the increasing fragmentation of Afro-Brazilian religious subjects, since each religious institution seeks to gain political influence through conflicting socio-political ideologies.

KEYWORDS

Neo-Pentecostalism. *Candomblé*. Neoliberal. Space. Race.

1. INTRODUCTION

With an acute awareness across the globe of widening economic inequalities and an increasingly elusive middle class, where do religious institutions fit into the modern social and

political ideologies? Historically, it is easy to point to the significance of religious influence within certain socio-political movements. Consider how the Black church and Black Muslim Nationalist organizations influenced racial consciousness across class lines during the civil rights movements in the United States. Also consider the role Voudon played in organizing slaves and former slaves to successfully and historically defeat French colonial rule in the Haitian revolution of 1804. It is through these examples in mind, among others, that I have focused this study as a comparative analysis of Brazilian religious organizations and their influence on identity politics, political ideals and race.

Examining interviews and ethnographic notes from research data compiled in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, with funds from the Tinker Field Foundation, this paper looks at the role of religion in political subject formation and the effects of neoliberal economic practices and ideologies on the religious Brazilian subject. I will seek to answer two main questions: First, how does the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God fit (or not) into the neoliberal agenda/ideology? Second, how does the Afro-Brazilian religion *Candomblé* fit (or not) into the neoliberal model? I will then compare the socio-cultural and symbolic alignments of neo-Pentecostalism and *Candomblé*, two religions with similar demographic constituents (working class, female, Afro-descended Brazilians), and how each religion favors different types of political subject formation in regard to space, racial consciousness and disenfranchisement. I will conclude by remarking on the increasing fragmentation of Afro-Brazilian religious subjects as each religious institution seeks to gain political influence through conflicting socio-political ideologies.

2. FREE MARKET FAITHS: THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH & NEOLIBERALISM

The Pentecostal church was introduced to Brazil in three successive waves from 1910 to 1970 (ORO; SEMAN, 2000) and in a short time, has grown significantly, particularly in low-income communities throughout the country.

One of the largest and most significant third wave Pentecostal (aka neo-Pentecostal) churches in Brazil and the site of my research, The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, was founded in 1977 and since its creation has been mired in controversy of fraud and religious intolerance towards Afro-Brazilian religions. However, the Universal Church continues to grow unabashedly, both nationally and across the globe (ORO; SEMAN, 2000) making neo-Pentecostalism one of the most demographically important religious movements in Brazilian history. It is predicted that its converts in Brazil could double in as little as ten years (CHESTNUT, 2003).

Despite the abundance of neo-Pentecostal churches, finding an interview site initially proved difficult. Specifically, when I would ask people whether they attended a neo-Pentecostal church, the response would almost inevitably be, “no.” Instead, many people would characterize their religious affiliation by church name or simply identify as “Cristão.” For instance, people who attend the church, Assembly of God (Assembleia de Deus) often self-identified as Christians and people from the Universal Church sometimes referred to themselves as “pentecostais.” Both churches, by technical qualification, are neo-Pentecostal. This confusion, however, is characteristic of the neoliberal moment worldwide. There is an increasing ambiguity of how people or concepts are defined or qualified. In the U.S., e.g. the boundaries of middle class are increasingly difficult to pinpoint and misidentification, in terms of economic class, is occurring more and more often.

Another key feature of neoliberalism is its decentralizing effects on geography and space. The public and private spheres are conflated as private enterprise takes over what were once considered public domains. However, it is noteworthy that neoliberalism takes on different characteristics in different settings. In Brazil, strict privatization of public services has not prevailed as yet. The Brazilian State owns about 64% of Petrobras which, according to the Latin Business Chronicle, is the largest company in Latin America by market capitalization and revenue, and the largest company headquartered in the Southern Hemisphere by market value (CHRONICLE STAFF, 2009). Furthermore, former President Lula during his two terms in office instated federally funded public welfare support (*Bolsa Família*) despite opposition, to help alleviate

poverty. The Brazilian context has not seen the same retreat by government agencies in the management of public services (e.g. privatization of education and healthcare) that the U.S. is increasingly experiencing. Further, the State manages one of the biggest corporations in Brazil and the revenue generated from Petrobras becomes State funds. The Brazilian context is challenging key traits of neoliberalism in support that, “(g)overnments should minimize their engagement in economic planning” and “government spending policies meant to benefit the poor [...] are ultimately counterproductive” (GRAEBER, 2010, p. 81).

Neoliberalism, while re-organizing the roles of the State and encouraging specific types of economic practices, also permeates societies at an ideological level. While neoliberal practices are not operating strongly at a politico-economic level, neoliberal ideology has permeated Brazilian society through the privileging of free market ideals or the belief that markets should be self-regulating and competitive.

While collecting narratives at the Universal Church, I was struck by how strongly neoliberal ideals were aligned with neo-Pentecostal ideals. I interviewed two constituents of the church, a young male pastor who converted to the church while struggling with drug addiction and an adolescent female who was raised within Universal Church. The subjects shared life narratives that vary considerably in terms of experience, however both rely on neoliberal ideology to illustrate the importance of conversion to neo-Pentecostalism in response to the difficulties Brazilian society presents.

Consider Example 1, an excerpt from my interview with the young, male pastor.

Example 1

Q: You said that here the church helped you with your financial life. How did they help?

1. Look, financially because we teach people in the church (pause) **how to win**
2. **Financially** and **not to depend on anyone**. This is the vision that we here pass onto
3. Others -to them. That they can, they can, yes, be the head [in charge]. They can be

4. In charge of their own business, **not depending on others** and that is the vision that
5. We pass on here. That they have potential because, there are many people who
6. Arrived here at the bottom, people who think that there is no way to overcome their
7. Problems. People who are unemployed, people who are **underdeveloped**, people
8. Thinking about taking their own life because they think that it's the only solution. It's
9. Here that we show them that **they are capable**. That **they can win** and that they
10. **Need not depend on anyone to win**. It depends on them alone, in their faith. So you
11. See its – so many people arrive here homeless, today they are good people, people
12. That are respected in society, have a good quality of life. So, this is what is taught to
13. People...

This text with the young pastor at the Universal Church contains hallmarks of neoliberal influence. The narrative reflects neoliberal assumptions that systems, specifically the market, will self-regulate. This belief blurs into the ideological understandings of the self and here the pastor is privileging the notion that individuals must also self-regulate, be competitive, and self-manage. He repeats over three times (see lines 2, 4, 10) that the church teaches individuals to be self-reliant and to “not depend” on others. Incessant references to competition also point to the ways in which the Universal Church may be categorized as a “Free Market Faith” (COMAROFF, 2009). Asserting the importance of financially winning (lines 1 and 9) mirror marketplace rhetoric as well, privileging competitive environments and comparing an individual’s struggle to gain financial stability with the struggles of corporations to beat out their competitors in the market.

Example 1 also highlights that neo-Pentecostal discourse concerning “best practices” appears as a symptom of neoliberal practices and ideology. “Best practices” refers to the belief that all issues are quantifiable and may be rectified with

one solution. When filtered through Universal Church rhetoric, “best practices” is demonstrated through the textual privileging of having the chance/choice to convert and consequently the church’s ability to offer positive life changes, to any and every individual.

Neo-Pentecostal and neoliberal ideology combine in the narratives with the overwhelming theme of *opportunity*, highlighting the ways in which the Universal Church can offer life changes, personal changes, and potential for a specific type of political change, as I will later argue. Conversion and the benefits it favors become a key focus in Universal Church rhetoric because, as Graeber (2010, p. 81) states, “a crucial element of neoliberalism [is] that, while the poor are to be held accountable for poor economic decisions (real or imagined), the rich must never be”. Accordingly, in line 10 the pastor says, “it depends on them alone” to gain “respect” and a “good quality of life”, which can only be attained through conversion.

What is most indicative about the narrative’s neoliberal influences, however, is that the speaker is a pastor by profession. Meaning neoliberal ideology is so embedded in neo-Pentecostal rhetoric that the Pastor’s words are repetitive, conscious, deliberate, and most likely, unexceptional. While I sat beside the pastor with Christian versions of Brazilian popular music (MPB) blasting in between services, he spoke confidently and quickly. Surely this was not the first time he shared this narrative and it would not be the last, pointing to the ways in which neoliberal discourse and motivation is consciously and overtly embedded within Universal Church rhetoric and ideology.

In the analysis by Comaroff (2009, p. 21) of “faith-based corporations,” she examines the growth of revitalized faiths as developing reciprocally to free-market, economic hegemony worldwide. Comaroff (2009) notes that revitalized faiths and neoliberalism are mutually influential. To further her point, she quotes an American pastor saying, “We want the church to look like a mall. We want you to come in and say, ‘Dude, where’s the cinema?’” (COMAROFF, 2009, p. 20). A South African pastor echoes this sentiment expressing that, “It might sound heretical but we strive above all to make our services exciting, affecting. Our competition, after all, is the video arcade, the movie house, and the casino” (COMAROFF, 2009, p. 21). Once again, religious narratives are deliberately refe-

rencing neoliberal ideals such as competition and consumerism and aligning these economic principles with the aims and interests of the church. Naturally, the largest Universal Church in the state of Bahia can be found in the capital, presiding over a sprawling, perpetually traffic-ridden freeway and competing, both geographically and architecturally, with the second largest mall in the region, Shopping Iguatemi.

3. OVERHEARING: A LIFE NARRATIVE

Example 2

001 ...So they [my parents] met here 23 years ago and have
002 been married for 20 years so I was born in
003 the Universal Church. And, oh my God, it was the best
004 thing for me because I avoided learning about
005 the bad things that the world presents today. For example,
006 my parents taught me to obey and not to
007 lie. I learned many things that, in the world, I wouldn't
008 have learned like to respect others, and
009 things like that. Still even in the church, we come to a part
010 of our lives where you are curious to know
011 what is outside but we learn, we see that the world is -has
012 destruction, misery, discord, and disgrace
013 that makes us think of God who is offering us love, affec-
014 tion, care, prosperity life changes and we
015 choose him for a better path. He can make you happy, get
016 rid of every pain, every burning, every
017 anchor. He makes new people, new creatures, so I got to a
018 point in my life where I decided to choose.
019 Thank God I chose the church, I chose the right path. To-
020 day I am here helping youths like me get out
021 of the world of drugs, prostitution and it's been marvelous
022 because we see life changes, see youths
023 that were drug traffickers turn into great men of God.
024 Total life changes in families and in their
025 personal lives. I see girls who prostituted, who sold their
026 body, become women of God, wives of one
027 man. [seeing] This difference is rewarding. I know that
028 God lives, that I Love God, and the Universal
029 Church is the Best thing that has happened in my life.

This is an excerpt from my interview with a Universal Church adolescent speaking about her experience being raised within the Universal Church. This narrative conveys the intersections of communication and ideology when analyzed by using the overhearing theory as proposed by Bubel (2008). Overhearing is why church rhetoric can relate to diverse (generationally, racially, class) religious subjects and how meaning is deduced without insider knowledge or experience of a conversation or theme. This narrative was delivered by a young woman who has never experienced drugs or prostitution and has never been interpolated by Universal Church ideology. However, it is noteworthy that she is making strong assertions about the experience of changing one's life and making choices.

The subject and "overhearer" (BUBEL, 2008), this young woman from the Universal Church, projects an ideological dichotomy, a moral geography

[...] that naturalize(s) particular understandings of space, time and identity or community and acts as if "there is a necessary link between the stories we tell of a place and the events that occur within it" (HAYDEN, 2010, p. 178).

Situating herself safely within one ideological terrain, she then describes what is found outside the church: "destruction," "misery," "discord," "disgrace," prostitution, and drug use/trafficking, *versus* what she has learned inside the church: "love," "affection," "care," "prosperity," and all-in-all a "better path."

Framing this narrative as a textual illustration of Bubel's theory of overhearing highlights the notion of "conjecturing"; I was able to draw out how common ground is forged through larger neoliberal ideals perpetuated (whether through media or globalization of American culture) in Brazilian society. It is the broader neoliberal ideology that bridges interpretive gaps for this young woman, among other constituents of the church with different backgrounds and experiences, yet who 'overhear' and situate themselves accordingly within a neo-Pentecostal (and neoliberal) ideology (BUBEL, 2008, p. 63). "Conjecturing" allows subjects to build connections with Universal Church rhetoric regardless of whether or not it is a perfect fit. Additionally, for the young woman, she is able to, "cho[o]se the right path" and navigate a moral terrain because it is not a

radical or estranged ideology; it has been reinforced in other social and cultural mediums as well. While neoliberal politico-economic practices do not favor the American model, neoliberal ideologies still hold a great deal of socio-economic influence over Brazilian neo-Pentecostal religious ideals.

4. QUEER/NORMAL SPATIALITIES AND RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

The process of overhearing and conjecturing illustrated in Example 2 encouraged me to consider how subjects creating meaning through moral geographies could be mapped spatially. My analysis of spatiality emerged from focusing on the significance of “change” reflected in neo-Pentecostal rhetoric and led me to consider conceptions of queer space *versus* normal space.

To begin, I will define “queer space” as I intend to use it to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. My theorization of queer space and normal space is based on the definition of “queer” by Halberstam (2005), who pushes the notion of “queer” past a simple criterion of sexual identity. Queer time and space, according to both Halberstam (2005) and Freeman (2010), refers to alternative chronologies and strange temporalities, the counter to normal space and time which is “upheld by a middle class logic of reproductive temporality... long periods of stability”, family time and the scheduling of daily life accordingly (HALBERSTAM, 2005, p. 10). Halberstam (2005, p. 4) emphasizes that societies are disciplined by heteronormative space/time constructs looking down on people who engage in risky activities and “live in rapid bursts”. This, I argue, is the temporal and ideological basis of Universal Church rhetoric. The two narratives from Universal Church constituents adhere to strict heteronormative temporalities where “normal” spaces are identified and idealized. Accordingly, where should the young neo-Pentecostal woman in Example 2 begin her life narrative but with the marriage of her parents? She then proceeds to glorify how prostitutes can, through choice and conversion to the Universal Church, transform themselves into the utmost “respectable” heteronormative idol, “wives of one man.”

Table 1

Neoliberalism	→	Neoliberalism
Public		Private
Outside the Church, 'the world,' <i>Candomblé</i>		Universal Church
Destruction, misery, discord, disgrace		Love, affection, care, prosperity
Drug use/trafficking & prostitution		Change, 'better path,' opportunities
Normal Space & Queer Space	→	Normal Space

Source: Elaborated by the author.

The Universal Church's concern with providing individuals with an avenue away from queer spaces (drugs and prostitution) and retention within normal spaces (marriage, heteronormative family, financial stability) could help to explain the overwhelming popularity and growth of neo-Pentecostal membership in the past ten years. Especially when rampant "queer" spaces such as drug trafficking communities, extended multi-home families, and sex industries provide many people with access to economies, albeit underground economies, that provide a level of financial stability and wealth otherwise unattainable to poor, black populations. Even the imagery evoked by the term "underground" points to the ways in which those who engage in "queer" and risky activities ought to be kept out of sight.

5. CANDOMBLÉ: QUEER SPACE AND NEOLIBERALISM

A comparison of neo-Pentecostalism and *Candomblé* is valuable because the two religious institutions serve similar demographics, poor Afro-Brazilians, and are known for their strong identity politics. Recently *Candomblé* and its related cultural form *Capoeira*, a martial arts dance, have been appropriated by the Brazilian State as cultural accents and commodities in the booming Brazilian tourist economy. Religious commodification has further contributed to the symbolic connection of *Candomblé* with blackness and authentic Afro-Brazilian identity (SELKA, 2005). Consider this advertisement for tourism in Salvador, for instance.

Image 1 – Bahia itinerary



Source: <http://www.adiama.com/bahiaitinerary.html>

The use of the word “Afrikan” with a “k” appeals to American Afro-centric ideology and rhetoric. “[A]frikan people,” Dr. Marimba Ani, a former civil rights and African Liberation Movement activist asserts,

[...] simply reveals that there are values, traditions and a heritage that we share because we have a common origin. The cultural process is naturally ongoing, which allows people to continuously affirm their connectedness through being linked to their origins... That is the spirit of our people. It is that spirit that connects us to our Afrikan roots (ANI, 1999).

Persistent violence against practitioners of *Candomblé* stemming from colonialism, State and Christian hegemony, and recent alignments of *Candomblé* with radical politics/racial discourse led me to consider *Candomblé* spaces as “queer spaces.” *Terreiros* or *Candomblé* houses of worship are rarely big or boisterous (like the Universal Church), but often hidden from view, on the outskirts, inside an abandoned part of someone’s home. According to Halberstam (2005, p. 10), queer space is just that: physically, metaphysically, and economically abandoned spaces, spaces of heightened risk, and spaces that would otherwise be dedicated to private activities and family. In comparison, *terreiros* are rarely as visual or grandiose as the Universal Churches and Universal Churches are rarely modest or hidden from view like their counterpart.

Although *Candomblé* falls into the queer space, it does not fit entirely into the ideal neoliberal model either. While neoliberalism privileges “coming out” and the bold confidence and security of a visible Universal Church, *Candomblé*’s reluctance to be seen or its tacit existence is not ideal in a neoliberal sense (DECENA, 2011). Furthermore, the culture of community and *Candomblé* rituals do not follow neoliberal agenda. In *Candomblé*, like other traditional African religions, there is little if no self-reliance. When you need/want something, you must ask ancestors, the *Orixás* and God for help. Not only must you ask for help, but you must make, with the guidance of a *mãe* or *pai de santo* or godmother/father, ritual offerings. Where is the self-management that we heard in the Universal Church narratives (examples 1 and 2)? It is not as strong because in *Candomblé*, a traditional, communal culture takes precedence over neoliberal models of self-reliance.

6. CHRONONORMATIVE TIME AND SIMILARITIES

Assuming that *Candomblé* occupies a queer space does not necessitate its adherence to queer time. Freeman (2010, p. 3) defines chrononormativity as

[...] the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity [...] people are bound to each other, engrouped, made to feel coherently collective, through particular orchestrations of time.

Every culture and institution uses chrononormativity and *Candomblé*, I argue, is no different. The *terreiro* meets every Monday night; there is a time to prepare the space, prepare the meals, after that there is singing and dancing which inevitably leads to the coming down of *Orixás* and/or other spirits. There are also annual offerings made on the same date for specific *Orixás* their respective Catholic saints. Here, the similarities between *Candomblé* and neo-Pentecostalism come to light. Both religious organizations adhere to chrononormativity, placing strategic value, and meaning upon time. Neo-Pentecostals have a time for weekly services; *Candomblé* has a time for weekly

services. Neo-Pentecostals dedicate time for recognizing deaths; *Candomblé* devotes time for ritualizing deaths.

Neo-Pentecostal's use of chrononormativity however, is aligned more with politico-economic times (birth, marriage, death) while *Candomblé* privileges milestones not traditionally recognized by the State (e.g. religious rites of passage). Neo-Pentecostal's ideological alignment with neoliberalism surpasses chrononormativity, looking to organize not just the individual but the "collective rhythms of entire populations;" this is termed "chronobiopolitics" (FREEMAN, 2010, p. 3).

The chronobiopolitics of neo-Pentecostalism puts the religion at odds with the ideological principles of *Candomblé*. The focus on community, specifically a community constantly looking back (see highlighted past tense usage in Example 3) and linked by a politicized ethno-racial identity, is at odds with forward-minded (opportunities for change), market driven chronologies (self-regulation and self-management), and individualist ideals privileged by neo-Pentecostal and neoliberal organizations. As a graduate student raised in a *Candomblé* *Nagô* household in Salvador shared with me,

[...] being [a part] of *Candomblé* is my communication with my ancestors, and [offers me] the certainty that I am not alone. It is my communication with Africa. I am much stronger, powerful, being [a part] of *Candomblé*.

When I juxtaposed this statement with the narrative of the young woman in the Universal Church, I recognized the ways in which political subject formation differs in each respective religious organization.

7. SHIFTING POLITICS: GOOD CITIZEN/BAD CITIZEN

Stephen L. Selka (2005) and John Burdick (1999) both argue that the individualist and universalist nature of Pentecostal discourse undermines the formation of ethnic group identity. Nevertheless, they say there is space for critical racial discourse within Pentecostalism and that black Pentecostals need to be better integrated into the black political organiza-

tions in the struggle against racism. Burdick (1999) asserts that Afro-Brazilian political organizations aligning themselves with Afro-Brazilian religions, such as *Candomblé*, have estranged black Pentecostals. Selka (2005), on the other hand, focuses on the – largely overlooked – diversity of Pentecostals, highlighting the *Movimento Evangélico Progressista* (Progressive Evangelical Movement) and its leftist and liberal political stance. Selka's work suggests that neo-Pentecostalism is by no means homogenous in political or theological orientation, although right wing, conservative Pentecostalism is certainly much more prevalent (ORO; SEMAN, 2000; SELKA, 2005).

The linking of *Candomblé* with African cultural attributes and “authentic” blackness, as Burdick points out, has led to critiques that Afro-Brazilian political organizations “alienate potential constituents of the movement” notably, Afro-Brazilian Pentecostals (BURDICK, 1999; SELKA, 2005). However, the issue is much more nuanced than that. Linking *Candomblé* with “the black identity” is problematic; however neo-Pentecostal privileging of Christian ideals while simultaneously downplaying racial consciousness as an immanent form of self-identification is also at issue. The choice and conversion into normal spaces provided and privileged by neo-Pentecostal churches shifts identity politics or the sense that the personal (identity) is political. Considering the rhetoric of competition illustrated in examples 1 and 2, privileging a Christian identity connects a diverse and growing global community of constituents (it *is* called the Universal Church after all!) and is also a way to distinguish black constituents from the politicized images of black practitioners of *Candomblé*. Furthermore, in this way neo-Pentecostals are engaging and reproducing a historic and hegemonic Brazilian discourse on identity, the “racial democracy”¹ and disidentifying with racially conscious and politicized rhetoric, which is criticized as a disingenuous appropriation of Western ideals and civil rights rhetoric. This is not to say, however, that black neo-Pentecostals are

¹ “Racial Democracy” is a term put forth by Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre to refer to the lack of racial discrimination, hierarchy, and tension in Brazil (in comparison with institutions like segregation in the U.S. and apartheid in South Africa) due to generations of mixing between Portuguese colonizers, Indigenous populations and enslaved Africans. Although the truth of a ‘racial democracy’ is debated, “racial democracy” is a strong part of Brazilian national identity and discourse.

a-political or politically inactive. Neo-Pentecostals and the Universal Church are extremely interested in politics.

Revitalized Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and nativist movements have striven, if in distinct ways, to reconstitute the order of things, to challenge the authority and neutrality of State law and the secularism of the market. Many late modern faiths work to unify the fragmented realms and plural cultural registers of liberal modern societies, seeking to recover the profane reaches of every day existence as instruments of divine purpose. Commerce, government, education, the media, and popular arts -nothing seems too trivial or debased to offer gist to the spiritual mill (COMAROFF, 2009, p. 20).

As Comaroff (2009) suggests, media has proven to be a particularly useful tool for political reorganization in the Brazilian context. Consequently, the Universal Church has a national network of FM radio stations and several local stations on AM and FM with strictly evangelical programming. It is also linked to the second largest Brazilian association of radio and TV networks, Abratel, not to mention partnerships with radio and TV networks around the world. Furthermore, the Universal Church also owns the label “Line Records” and in 2005, the Church even founded its own political party, the Party Renewal Municipalist, now known as the Brazilian Republican Party, which held an affiliation with former vice president José Alencar.

Again, while *Candomblé* has become symbolically radical and perhaps, “too American,” neo-Pentecostals, by privileging their Christian identity first, have aligned more with Brazilian hegemony and are therefore allowed greater access to resources, reaches in the political sphere and acceptance in society by adhering to national discourses of race.

Furthermore, the conjecturing of neoliberal ideology interpolating subjects from high levels redefines citizenry, resituating citizens as consumer/clients first. Therefore the interest of the Universal Church in providing access to “normal space” and chronobiopolitical time, reshapes subjects into the ideal neoliberal citizens: “financially successful,” “wives of one man,” “respected in society” or, in the words of neoliberal expert Aihwa Ong (2006, p. 3), “disciplined,” “efficient” and “optimized”. The redefinition of good citizens linked to good

Christians under neoliberal ideals is simultaneously reconstructing and marking others, specifically practitioners of *Candomblé*, as bad citizens, citizens who place blame on the State and reject national discourses on race and racism. Consider Example 3.

Example 3

Q: *That's interesting because it seems as if—no, I should ask. Do you think that the State and community do not offer help but that the church offers this kind of help for people, help like with work?*

A: Look, there are people [pause] who work in the church. There are people who work in the church. But it's the kind of thing where a person arrives here suffering and we teach them to win. Win both here and outside, in the world. Do you understand? Because the Universal Church is the kind of thing, we tell people that misery is [whispered tone] a thing of the devil. It's because the Bible says that God came to bring life and life with changes and that is what we believe in the Universal Church...

This excerpt is from the last five minutes of my interview with the Universal Church pastor. After discussing the many programs funded by the church that aim to provide work and educational opportunities for Universal Church constituents, I asked this question looking to get feedback on the role of the community and State in providing work. Instead, I received a response that does not answer my question or acknowledge the State or community at all. The pastor's refusal to implicate the State highlights neo-Pentecostal interest in embodying ideals of good citizenry and modern neoliberals. As good citizens, the role that Universalists are allowed to play in politics increases, grounding the Universal Church in seemingly real opportunities for change at both a personal and political level. Comaroff (2009, p. 22) even references the Universal Church in her work, stating:

In 2005, a Brazilian preacher told an audience of hundreds in the gleaming new Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in central Cape Town: "When the film credits roll at the end of your life, they will not acknowledge the South African government. They will thank us at the Universal Church".

The Universal Church does not seek simply to influence politics but looks to supplant the role of the State for individuals in society. Encouraging constituents not to look to or hold the government accountable for poverty, unhappiness, and injustice, and instead rely on the church and faith to provide opportunities is a problematic shift, further alienating *Candomblé* practitioners seeking recognition and racial justice through the legal system that in turn describes them as “not a real religion.” Federal Justice Eugênio Rosa de Araújo of Rio de Janeiro made this declaration in May of 2014. After the swift backlash from anti-racism activists and leaders, he later retracted this statement. In typical neoliberal fashion, we see that accountability and responsibility is being decentralized, blurring the defining aspects of citizenship *versus* what constitutes privilege.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Putting religious identity over racial identity by Brazilian neo-Pentecostals may be viewed as a reproduction of National values (“racial democracy”) and as active disidentification with American socio-cultural politics. Ward (2008, p. 25) argues that indicators of sexual identity cannot be focused solely on the act (of sex) but should necessarily include the cultural alignments of subjects as well. Perhaps we should also consider that it is also not enough, in the Brazilian context, to “be black” (physically, figuratively, phenotypically, etc.), and that racial politics and identification should necessarily include cultural alignments as well. As a result, for Afro-Brazilian neo-Pentecostals who actively disidentify with an ethno-racial community and racial discourse/politic, like Ward’s straight dudes who engage in sexual activities with other straight dudes, inclusion into the “queer” or in this case the black community, should not be assumed. Subjects making forceful alignments with heteronormative, colorblind, Christian culture should not be undermined, overlooked, or deemed “falsely conscious” in order to quantify (as opposed to qualify) anti-racism movements.

Furthermore, as neoliberalism and the Brazilian tourism industry seeks to privilege one marketable image of black-

ness in Brazil, stricter divisions will be placed between black Brazilians desiring a modern, Christian, neoliberal identity and those nostalgic for tourist-friendly, diasporic, Afro-Brazilianess. Perhaps it is as Comaroff (2009, p. 26) proposes, that neoliberalism produces both “appetite and impossibility”. The tourism industry’s push to sell *Candomblé* as “authentic” Afro-Brazil framed in western racial-political discourse has further othered this “queer” space, creating more appetite for equity, but straining the political relations needed to instill a true racial democracy. Neo-Pentecostals, on the other hand, have a healthy appetite for access to the middle-upper class however without clear political strategies and discourse addressing the structural issues inhibiting distribution of wealth, both within the church and throughout Brazil, their objectives seem nothing short of superficial. In the meanwhile, newer and bigger malls continue to spring forth in Salvador, allowing people to at least satiate their desire for consumerism.

POLÍTICAS UNIVERSAIS: NEOPENTECOSTALISMO, CANDOMBLÉ E POLÍTICAS DE ESPAÇO/RAÇA

RESUMO

Com uma acurada consciência global em torno do aumento das desigualdades econômicas e uma classe média cada vez mais evasiva, onde as instituições religiosas se encaixam em modernas ideologias sociais e políticas? Examinando entrevistas e notas etnográficas a partir de dados compilados em Salvador, Bahia, procuro responder a duas questões principais: em primeiro lugar, como a Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus se encaixa (ou não) em uma agenda/ideologia neoliberal? Em segundo lugar, como o Candomblé se encaixa (ou não) no modelo neoliberal? Comparando os alinhamentos socioculturais e simbólicos do neopentecostalismo e do Candomblé e como cada religião facilita diferentes tipos de formação do sujeito político em relação ao espaço e consciência racial, concluo comentando sobre a crescente fragmentação dos temas religiosos afro-brasileiros e sobre como cada instituição procura ganhar influência política utilizando ideologias sociopolíticas conflitantes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Neopentecostalismo. Candomblé. Neoliberal. Espaço. Raça.

REFERENCES

ANI, M. To be Afrikan. 1999. Available on: <http://www.africawithin.com/ani/ani_afrikan.htm>. Accessed in: Nov. 28 2011.

BUBEL, C. M. Film audiences as overhearers. *Journal of Pragmatics*, v. 40, p. 55-71, 2008.

BURDICK, J. What is the color of the Holy Spirit? Pentecostalism and Black Identity in Brazil. *Latin America Research Review*, v. 34, n. 2, p. 109-131, 1999.

CHESTNUT, A. *Competitive spirits Latin America's new religious economy*. London: Oxford University Press, 2003.

CHRONICLE STAFF. Latin Business Chronicle: Petrobras Largest Company in Latin America. 2009. Available on: <<http://www.latinbusinesschronicle.com/app/article.aspx?id=3440>>. Accessed on: Nov. 16 2011.

COMAROFF, J. The politics of conviction: faith on the neo-liberal frontier. *Social Analysis*, v. 53, n. 1, p. 17-38, 2009.

DECENA, C. U. *Tacit subjects: belonging and same-sex-desire among Dominican immigrant men*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

FREEMAN, E. *Time binds queer temporalities, queer histories*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

GRAEBER, D. Neoliberalism, or the bureaucratization of the world. In: BESTEMAN, C.; GUSTERSON, H. *The insecure American: how we got here and what we should do about it*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

HALBERSTAM, J. *In a queer time and place*. New York; London: NYU Press, 2005.

HAYDEN, B. The hand of god: capitalism, inequality, and moral geographies in Mississippi after hurricane Katrina. *Anthropological Quarterly*, v. 83, n. 1, p. 177-204, 2010.

ONG, A. Introduction: neoliberalism as exception, exception as neoliberalism. In: ONG, A. (Org.). *Neoliberalism as exception: mutations in citizenship and sovereignty*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. p. 1-29.

ORO, A. P.; SEMAN, P. Pentecostalism in the Southern Cone countries: overview and perspectives. *International Sociology*, v. 15, p. 605-627, 2000.

SELKA, S. L. Ethnoreligious identity politics in Bahia, Brazil. *Latin American Perspectives*, v. 32, n. 1, p. 72-94, 2005.

WARD, J. Dude-sex: white masculinities and authentic heterosexuality among dudes who have sex with dudes. *Sexualities*, v. 11, n. 4, p. 414-434. 2008.

Recebido em março de 2015.
Aprovado em março de 2015.