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## **“Me Gritaron Negra”: The emergence and development of the Afro-descendant women’s movement in Peru (1980-2015)**

By Eshe Lewis<sup>1</sup> and John Thomas III<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

This article examines the evolution of the Afro-descendant women's movement in Peru between 1980 and 2015. We examine the development of women’s conscious through other movements, specifically through the national Afro-Peruvian movement and the regional feminist encounters that have been taking place since the 1980s. Our study outlines the tensions, and points of convergence and divergence that have existed for Afro-Peruvian women in these movements. We demonstrate how these issues characterize the nature of Afro-Peruvian women's struggle and their social and political position within the realm of race- and gender-based activism. We show that this friction has prompted women to challenge their institutions and to create spaces for themselves to focus on their own specific needs. First, we trace the Afro-descendant and feminist movements, beginning at the regional level before focusing on the specific case of Peru. Then we outline the different roles that women activists have occupied within the Afro-descendant movement in-country and show how their participation became more visible within their respective organizations and, at times, in the government. Finally, we examine the emergence of a new feminist Afro-Peruvian collective that has served as a locus of cross-organizational dialogue and articulation for veteran and newer activists. The conclusion outlines important current advances involving civil society collectives. The data featured in this paper were collected through extensive archival research, in-depth semi-structured interviews with representatives from the Afro-descendant movements in Peru conducted between 2004 and 2013, and intensive participant observation.

*Keywords:* Afro-descendants, Peru, social activism, women, feminism, race, racism, social movements, participant observation, archival research

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## Introduction

AL FIN

*Y bendigo al cielo porque quiso Dios  
que negro azabache fuese mi color*

*Y ya comprendí*

AL FIN

*Ya tengo la llave*

NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO

NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO

NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO NEGRO

NEGRO NEGRO

*¡Negra soy!*

AT LAST

And I bless the sky because God

Wanted my color to be jet black

And I understood

AT LAST

I have the key

BLACK BLACK BLACK BLACK

BLACK BLACK BLACK BLACK

BLACK BLACK BLACK BLACK

BLACK BLACK

I am a black woman!

*Victoria Eugenia Santa Cruz Gamarra (1922-2014)*

In 1978 Victoria Eugenia Santa Cruz Gamarra, a poet, songwriter, dancer, choreographer, activist, and key figure of the Afro-Peruvian<sup>3</sup> cultural renaissance movement, wrote “*Me Gritaron Negra*” (They Yelled “Black” at me). This poem follows the trajectory of a young Victoria who, at age seven, realizes that she is black as people in the street begin to yell “*negra*” at her. Santa Cruz recounts her process of developing an awareness of this aspect of her identity as it was imposed on her by others, and of coming to see herself as ugly and undesirable as they did. She details her struggle with self-hatred as she describes her dislike of her skin color, facial features, and hair. In an attempt to distance herself from her blackness she straightens her curls and powders her skin to appear lighter, until one day she develops a sense of pride in her racial identity. Santa Cruz speaks back to the voices that degraded her, not only by contesting their use of the term “*negra*” as an insult, but also by finding beauty and power in a term that was used to degrade her and celebrating her pride by leaving behind the practices of whitening in favor of her natural appearance.

“*Me Gritaron Negra*” has become a poetic anthem for women throughout the African Diaspora who relate to Santa Cruz’s journey to self-love even after the author’s passing in 2014; however, the significance of the moment in which the poem was penned is often lost. At a time when Lima society focused on Afro-descendant identity within the confines of theatrical folkloric performances that featured black women as carefree and happy remnants of a romanticized colonial past (Feldman 2006), Santa Cruz, through “*Me Gritaron Negra*,” made a bold political and public statement about the harsh modern-day realities of being both black and woman in the context of Peru. This message rang out just as the Afro-Peruvian social justice movement was mobilizing and years before the issues of women and gender inequality were brought up within the movement. For these reasons, Santa Cruz is increasingly recognized today as a cultural and political trailblazer, who Afro-Peruvian women activists and their counterparts throughout the Latin American region continue to invoke and honor in their own work. As steadfast protagonists in their respective feminist, women’s, and ethno-racial movements, black women are increasingly

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<sup>3</sup> The terms “Black” and “Afro-Latin/Peruvian” are used interchangeably throughout this paper to refer to persons of African descent in Latin America and Peru.

recognized for their role in creating spaces to develop, center, discuss, and reflect upon their realities and demands. Their efforts have resulted in the creation of a dynamic Afro-Latin American women's movement<sup>4</sup> comprised of a well-established and interconnected network of activists.

While the lion's share of the current literature that focuses on black women's activism in Latin America focuses on Brazil and Colombia,<sup>5</sup> in this article we seek to trace the evolution of Afro-Peruvian women's presence and participation in important conversations and organized struggles from 1980 to 2015. We use data collected through archival research, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews to outline the arch of this history as it began in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that led to government-sponsored Afro-Peruvian women's roundtables, and finally to the creation of *Presencia y Palabra*, an Afro-Peruvian women's feminist collective. We argue that although Afro-Peruvian women have always been present in the feminist and identity-based movements (among others), and have created and sustained women's or women-focused organizations, the rise of cross-organizational articulation resulting in discussions, actions, and activities that focus on the specific issues pertaining to women of African descent at the national level have only gained traction from the mid-2000s and onward. We also note that while key legacy women's organizations have not participated in this new mobilization, many other organizations and veteran activists have.

We begin with a brief analytical narrative describing the formation and impact of the Afro-Latin American Movement, the Latin American Feminist Movement and the Afro-Latin American Women's Movement to contextualize Afro-Peruvian women's organizing and articulations. We then focus on the emergence and development of the Afro-Peruvian Women's Movement from 1986 until 2015. To conclude, we consider the conditions and contexts that spurred the creation of a new Afro-Peruvian feminist collective, and what it means for the future of the movement.

### **The Afro-Latin American Movement**

The present-day Afro-descendant movement in Latin America is composed of grassroots, non-governmental, governmental, and civil organizations. These entities engage in efforts at the national, regional, and international levels to increase visibility and address the significant problems that peoples of African heritage face. These issues vary greatly depending on contextual realities, which is unsurprising considering that according to large-scale surveys and reports, African descendants constitute at minimum one-third of the Latin American population (Agudelo, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Morrison, 2012, Freire et al., 2018).

Afro-Latin Americans have been successful to varying degrees in pressuring their nations to recognize and address their communities and the discrimination they face, honor human rights treaties, and respect their constitutional rights. There is ample evidence of resistance to racial oppression and discrimination dating back to African enslavement; however, the mass mobilization of Africans and Afro-descendants around the world inspired the Latin American region, namely the fight for civil rights in the USA and the many African nations fighting to unseat colonial regimes beginning in the 1960s (Feldman, 2006; Golash-Boza, 2011; Morrison, 2007; Paschel, 2016). In the Latin American region, activism stemming from Leftist and other political

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<sup>4</sup> We use the definition in Tarrow (2013) of a social movement: "collective challenges to elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interactions with elites, opponents and authorities." (7).

<sup>5</sup> For example: Carneiro (2003), Caldwell (2007), Khan-Perry (2013), Paschel (2016) and Smith (2016).

and civil groups opposed to the repressive dictatorships of the period would help incite new coordinated action to improve the conditions of peoples of African heritage. Non-governmental organizations were formed as a result of this mobilization, and they denounced *mestizaje*<sup>6</sup> and other racist ideologies that sustained the marginalization of this population.

As a diverse and complex movement, internal tensions around power and visibility within the Afro-Latin American movement are constantly being analyzed. Women have become critical of the political power imbalances that characterize their interactions with other activists within their organizations. They recognize *machismo*, a term for Latin American sexism, as a factor that continues to contribute to the lack of recognition of women's work in administration, organization, and grassroots work, and the overrepresentation of men as the spokespeople and faces of the movement (Flake and Forste, 2006; Safa, 2005). Afro-Brazilian women, for example, constituted most of the members in the national movement from the 1960s to the 1980s and dedicated impressive amounts of time to ground and office work, but men made the executive decisions and spoke on behalf of the organization (Caldwell, 2007). Over time, black women activists took issue not only with the uneven distribution of power between themselves and their male colleagues but also with what they saw as a noticeable absence of attention directed toward addressing gender inequalities within the movement. They have cited various cases in which women's issues have been overlooked, ignored, or addressed in ways that demonstrate a lack of understanding of women's needs and a failure to include their perspectives (Carrillo and Carrillo, 2011; Carneiro, 2003a; Caldwell, 2007; Safa, 2005).

The women who pioneered the Afro-Peruvian women's movement participated, like other many other women in the region, in their national Afro-descendant movement. Along with women from other countries, Afro-Peruvian women were present at the 2000 Santiago pre-conference meetings for the Third World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa from August 31 to September 8, 2001 (also known as the 2001 Durban Conference or WCAR), a United Nations conference that had profound significance for Afro-descendants around the world (Cardemil, 2002).<sup>7</sup> Influenced by the Durban Conference, women activists in the Afro-Latin American Movement continued to speak about these issues amongst themselves and created spaces in which they could further parse out these topics. One of the areas where this has happened is in the conferences and summits generated by the second wave feminist movement.

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<sup>6</sup> In the Peruvian context, *mestizaje*, as it manifested in the coastal region of the country where Afro-descendants have historically resided, resulted in a restricted recognition of African contributions to society—predominately in music and dance (Feldman 2006). Additionally, it silenced discussions about anti-Black ethnic and racial discrimination on the basis that Peruvians were products of an equitable mix of African, Indigenous, and European heritage, and therefore such tensions were unthinkable (Thomas, 2011). Afro-Peruvian activists have stressed the racist undertones and damaging effect of this discourse on peoples of African descent in their country and made strong claims outlining the legacy of structures of inequality that diminish their quality of life (CEDET 2005; CEDET 2008; MIMP 2014; Carrillo and Carrillo, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> The 2001 Durban Conference is viewed as a watershed moment for the Afro-Latin American Movement that accelerated and encouraged the growth of activist organization throughout the region and a collective "Afrodescendant" political identity and placed international pressure for the claims of the movement to be addressed formally by states and international organizations. Renowned Afro-Uruguayan activist Ambassador Romero Rodriguez, one of the leaders of the Strategic Alliance of Afro-Latino organizations noted the now famous statement, "We entered Black and left Afro-descendant." (Lennox, 2009; Thomas, 2011; Davis et. al., 2012).

## **The Latin American Feminist Movement**

The Latin American feminist movement has been an important platform for personal and collective growth, networking, and pushing women's issues into the spotlight. It also continues to be a space of tension, contestation, and struggle for Afro-descendant women who belong to this movement as they constantly grapple with feminism given the on-going racist and classist nature of mainstream feminism that excludes and harms them. While there are women who form part of the Afro-Peruvian women's movement who do not self-identify as feminists or are wary of feminism for these reasons and therefore choose not to participate in the feminist movement, we recognize its importance to and influence on the theoretical perspectives and courses of action taken by many participants in the black women's movement today.

The second wave of feminism in Latin America arose in the 1970s as part of the larger women's movement out of the New Left and amidst repressive and authoritative military regimes (Alvarez, 1999; Sternbach et al., 1992). As such, a distinguishing feature of the origins of feminism in this region is the role of both class inequality and state violence in its ideological and practical foundation, development, and application. Women involved in Leftist opposition parties identified patriarchy as a structure of oppression and recognized the repressive, authoritarian governments in power as large-scale manifestations of patriarchal relations that play out in the private sphere within the family structure, interpersonal relationships, and sustain the everyday marginalization of women (Sternbach et al., 1992; Frohman and Valdés, 2018). By the late 1970s and early 1980s, women from all social classes had become involved in opposition movements, engaging in political activity and dialogue. They participated in efforts to secure better resources for the working classes and the poor during times of economic crisis while spreading consciousness about the relationship between activism and gender roles (Sternbach et al., 1992).

As the regional feminist movement continues to evolve, diversify, and expand, the respective organizational bodies create agendas and demands that are firmly rooted in women's regional, national, and local realities, and therefore reflect their perspectives and needs (Escobar, Alvarez, and Dagnino, 2001; Laó-Montes, 2016; Bastian Duarte, 2012). Feminists continue to analyze their specific realities while they also maintain the tradition of carrying out their work within this movement and in others, and bringing their discourses into broader political, social, cultural, and economic spaces (Escobar, Alvarez, and Dagnino, 2001).

Afro-descendant feminists have developed theories and praxes that link different facets of their identities while highlighting how they work in tandem to contribute to the injustices that women face. Feminisms created by and centering women of African descent consider class in conjunction with race and gender to capture the particular nature of their experiences and challenge the structures and cultures within the movement and in the broader society that sustain their oppression. Afro-Latin American feminists describe themselves individually and collectively as women who face triple discrimination because they are poor, black, and women (Carrillo and Carrillo, 2011; Carneiro, 2003a; Caldwell, 2007; Santos, 2009; Santos, 2007). As activists who align themselves with both the feminist and Afro-descendant movement, they also note that they encounter these forms of discrimination within both—in the feminist movement because of their race, and in the Afro-descendant movement because of their gender (Santos, 2007; Curiel, 2015; Carneiro, 2003; Laó-Montes, 2016). They denounce the disparities that are reflected in leadership and interpersonal relationships within both movements while creating their own autonomous spaces in the process (Balcácer and Wilson, 2012).

## Black Women's Articulations in Latin America

Given the wide array of events, meetings, conferences, and other points of gathering for feminists over the past decades, following the trajectory of Afro-Latin American women through these spaces can be a dizzying feat. For this reason—and in the interest of providing more context to the Afro-Peruvian women's movement—following the EFLAC (*El Encuentro Feminista de Latinoamérica y el Caribe*, Feminist Encounter of Latin America and the Caribbean) meetings is of specific importance to understanding the most recent national articulations. The context of the rise of both the second wave feminist and the Afro-descendant movements set the stage for increased participation by Afro-Latin American women in both. As they are involved in both the struggle for gender and racial equality, they demand that civil society, politicians and international agencies, and legal bodies help to increase policy implementation that will contribute to more equitable Latin American societies (Morrison, 2012; Alvarez, 2000, 1999; Johnson, 2012; Do Nascimento and Larkin Nascimento, 2001).

The first EFLAC or *encuentro*, took place in Bogotá, Colombia in 1981. Since then, they have taken place every two or three years for a period of three to four days and have grown substantially both in terms of the number of participants and in the topics addressed during the meetings. The *encuentros* have served as unique spaces for regional conversations, debates, networking, and mobilization for Latin American feminists and women dedicated to addressing issues of gender inequality (Alvarez, 2000). Women of diverse work, class, race, ethnic, political, and regional backgrounds have questioned and challenged the meaning of different feminisms and addressed the points of convergence and divergence of diverse feminist theories across social spheres (Alvarez et al., 2003).

Afro-descendant women have consistently attended the *encuentros* and have voiced their concern about the lack of workshops, discussions, and attention given to the women of African descent because of anti-black racism and gender discrimination. These efforts have been documented in the manifestos and summaries of these meetings and reveal demands for more diversity in both participant profiles, workshop, and panel subject matter began during the second meeting in 1983 in Lima, Peru (Sternbach et al., 1992). Unlike the Bogotá *encuentro* where most attendees were white, university-educated, middle-class women, Indigenous and Afro-descendant women were represented in larger numbers at this event as they have been ever since (Sternbach et al., 1992). Afro-Latin American women have demanded formal statements against racism on behalf of the administration, and more space at future *encuentros* to address racism and feminism (Chadwick, Gómez, and Portugal, 1984). Their requests, while accessible via documentation regarding the conference, do not seem to have been addressed in the culminating resolutions of that conference even as the manifestos and advances made by other groups of participants figured into official summaries of the *encuentro*. This demonstrates that Afro-descendant women have been actively and collectively advocating for space for themselves at the regional level because their efforts and goals have often not been acknowledged.

They have also rallied in favor of more inclusive participation, particularly for poor black women who face financial barriers due to travel and registration fees (Sternbach et al., 1992; Alvarez et al., 2003; Zamudio, 1995). Afro-Brazilian women were at the helm of these protests at the *encuentro* in Bertioga, Brazil in 1985, and were accompanied by Afro-Peruvian women, including Delia Zamudio, the first woman and Afro-descendant union leader in Peru, who would later write about this clash in her memoir. Zamudio's depiction of the tension in Bertioga pinpoints the emergence of Afro-Peruvian voices in regional feminist dialogue (Zamudio, 1995).

Later *encuentros* continued the pattern of featuring peripheral and infrequent discussions of race and racism through inconsistent workshops in response to which Afro-descendant feminists have repeatedly conveyed their discontent through statements and protest (Restrepo and Bustamante, 2009; Mauleón, 1998; del Caribe, 1987). This history of dissatisfaction with the representation at the EFLAC meetings sets the stage for the mobilization of Afro-Peruvian women at the *encuentro* in 2014 which took place in Lima. The formation of *Presencia y Palabra: Mujeres Afro-descendientes* (Presence and Voice: Afro-descendant Women) is in direct response this neglect.

While they used the *encuentros* to protest the lack of commitment to addressing race in a feminist space, these women simultaneously used the regional gatherings as meeting points and spaces in which they formed alliances amongst themselves. The conference in San Bernardo del Tuyú, Argentina in 1990 was a landmark event for many of these feminists as they formed *la Red de Mujeres Afrolatinoamericanas, Caribeñas y de la Diáspora* (the network of women from Afro-Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Diaspora, RMAAD), a network that remains intact today. RMAAD has since expanded into a substantial regional network that links local organizations, NGOs, politicians, national fronts, and other collectives around the theme of Afro-descendant women (Agudelo, 2012). The network places emphasis on the structural nature of oppression and the ways that this oppression marginalizes women of African descent through sexism, racism, and poverty with racism being a key factor that differentiates their struggle from that of the larger feminist movement (Wilson, 2011; Red De Mujeres Afrolatinoamericanas, Afrocaribeñas Y De La Diáspora, 2009). Cecilia Ramirez, a veteran Afro-Peruvian activist, and founder and president of CEDEMUNEP (*El Centro de la Mujer Negra Peruana*, the Center for the Black Peruvian Woman), has been a member for decades and is currently one of two representatives of the Andean Regio for RMAAD.

Afro-Peruvian women activists have been profoundly affected by their experiences at the EFLAC meetings. As a collective regional space, it has served as a base from which they have worked together to further their vision of feminist interactions and dialogues that recognize them as protagonists and consider their needs and experiences as women of African descent. These regional experiences and struggles have contributed to and shaped the development of the Afro-Peruvian women's movement in Peru.

### **The Evolution of an Afro-Peruvian Women's Movement: Women's Involvement in the Afro-Peruvian Organizational Process**

The modern Afro-Peruvian social justice movement traces its origins to the Afro-Peruvian cultural renaissance of the 1950s. The influx of Black immigrants from the rural provinces to Lima during the 1950s sparked renewed interest in Afro-Peruvian songs and dances, many of which had not been widely practiced in Lima. Several Black dance and theater folklore groups spread throughout the Lima-based Afro-Peruvian community involving prominent Black musical families such as Vazquez, Campos, Santa Cruz, and Azcue. The most notable group was the *Grupo Cumananá* founded by Victoria and her brother, Nicomedes Santa Cruz Gamarra.<sup>8</sup> A talented performer like his sister, Nicomedes was a noted singer particularly gifted in the traditional Afro-Peruvian poetry form called the *décima*. The Santa Cruz siblings would feature prominently in the creation and dissemination of Afro-Peruvian cultural patrimony on national and international levels (Luciano, 1986).

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<sup>8</sup> For more information on these groups see Feldman (2006) and Dorr (2017).



While the 1950s groups were largely dedicated to increasing the visibility of Afro-Peruvian art and culture, later groups would become more politically oriented because of influence from the United States Civil Rights Movement and the struggle for equality for Black United States citizens. The formation of *la Asociación Cultural para la Juventud Negra Peruana* (Cultural Association for Black Peruvian Youth) or ACEJUNEP and its sister organization *La Tribu* (the Tribe) in the early 1970s mark another period of Afro-Peruvian organization that directly impacts today's groups. ACEJUNEP and the Tribe served as social and cultural outlets for young teenage Afro-Peruvians—many of whom were children of the immigrants from the provinces (Luciano and Rodríguez, 1995). ACEJUNEP and *La Tribu* were known for holding Soul Parties (this English term was used in Spanish) in which salsa, Afro-Peruvian music, and contemporary Black music from the United States were played as an affirmation of Black culture. The fusion of these different types of Black music contributed to a diasporic understanding of Blackness that extended beyond local Afro-Peruvian culture.<sup>9</sup> These organizations, however, were not motivated solely by a desire for diversion nor were they only a space for the performance of Black culture. Instead, they were influenced by the decolonization of Africa, Black Power in the United States, and the cultural revival movement in urban Peru (Campos, 2005). In these settings, attendees popularized the use of the “Afro” hairstyle, which proved revolutionary for Afro-Peruvian women given the cultural norms that dictated that Black women should have their hair straightened. Activist Margarita Ramírez notes that the poem “*Me Gritaron Negra*” became particularly impactful for Black women in Peru because Victoria Santa Cruz is speaking about their shared experience with discrimination against Black women’s features, including their hair, in an Andean context. Her explicit expression of pride in her appearance sparked the beginning of what remains an ongoing revalorization of Black women’s natural African features (Ramírez, 2010).

In 1983, a group of young, mostly Afro-Peruvian university students led by José Campos, José Luciano, and Juan José Vazquez, founded the *Instituto de Investigaciones Afro-Peruanas* (Institute for Afro-Peruvian Studies) or INAPE. Many of the students had participated in ACEJUNEP and *La Tribu* and were looking to integrate research on Afro-Peruvians into their scholarly education. Additionally, the students were influenced by other similar impulses among young Afro-Latin Americans throughout the region.<sup>10</sup> Through his travels to various conferences in Latin American nations as well as the United States, José Campos established a network of regional contacts which eventually led to Ford Foundation funding for INAPE’s research. (Mandros, 2001). INAPE also received a small amount of funding from the *Consejo Nacional de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación Tecnológica* (National Council of Science and Technology; CONCYTEC) in Peru.

INAPE’s work included compiling oral histories of the coastal Afro-Peruvian communities, creating a document known as “Diagnostic of the Black Reality in Peru,” and authoring the first geo-ethnic map of the Afro-Peruvian population. Additionally, several monographs were written and published in various domestic and international journals. INAPE vigorously pursued the integration of Afro-Peruvian themes and discussions into universities throughout Lima and its suburbs, including the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru and the

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<sup>9</sup> It is now common to see Afro-Peruvian youth in Lima emulating the style of dress of urban Afro-United States. During the data collection process, the authors observed several parties with Afro-Peruvian youth using hip-hop dress while dancing to Afro-Peruvian music, salsa, reggaeton and hip-hop.

<sup>10</sup> In 1978, a group of young Afro-Colombian students formed a research organization named “Soweto” to facilitate scholarly investigations of their communities. The name “Soweto” was picked to symbolize solidarity with the South-African anti-apartheid struggle. Nelson Mandela is an important symbol to the Afro-Peruvian movement and his 90th birthday in 2008 was used as an occasion to convene the 2nd National Congress of Afro-Peruvians.

University of San Marcos (Campos, 2005). These periodic university lectures not only opened up academic spaces which had largely ignored Afro-Peruvian issues but also touched the wider Afro-Peruvian community. Several people who would go on to occupy leadership in the movement stated the INAPE lectures as their point of entry into the Afro-Peruvian movement, including veteran activist Sofia Arizaga (Arizaga, 2008; Bilbao, 2008).

INAPE would also be the first Afro-Peruvian group to articulate the need for a specific discussion around issues that specifically affected women. When female INAPE investigators visited rural areas, they found that Afro-Peruvian women were concerned with the lack of employment opportunities and unequal division of household labor that left women with the most of the work. They also spoke about negative attitudes towards single motherhood because of *machismo*. Susana Matute, one of the Afro-Peruvian university students who joined INAPE, states:

“Eight women composed the women’s section of INAPE: Isabel Dávila Flores, Gladys Rodríguez Mina, Ernestina Hernández Legario, Gladys Acuña, Angélica Ríos Villena, Lourdes Campo Bravo and myself. Our first activity was to find out the location and situation of other Black women. Chincha was our first destination, then Cañete, Yapatera, La Banda, El Ingenio, Acarí. As we moved further from the city and discovered more areas, the smaller we felt about the great job we had to do.” (Matute 2010, 149)

However, despite INAPE’s initial success, the organization was constantly burdened by financial constraints and by 1987 the Ford Foundation grant funding period ended forcing INAPE to close its office and cease its investigative work. Although INAPE’s attempts were short-lived, this organization was the first to consider the concerns of Afro-Peruvian women specifically. These attempts laid the groundwork for the contemporary Afro-Peruvian Women’s Movement.

### **Women in the Emergence of the Contemporary Afro-Peruvian Movement: 1986-2000 *Movimiento Negro Francisco Congo* (Francisco Congo Black Movement)**

On November 30, 1986, former INAPE member Andres Mandros and several other persons gathered in a house in Lima to form what would be known as the *Movimiento Negro Francisco Congo* (Francisco Congo Black Movement, or MNFC). Francisco Congo (or Chavelilla), the leader of Peru’s largest settlement of escaped slaves, was eventually captured and killed by Spanish colonial troops in 1713 after attempting to negotiate an agreement for autonomy.<sup>11</sup> By picking this name, the founders of the MNFC consciously chose to identify with a symbol of Black resistance in Peru.

Essential to the MNFC’s mission was the revalorization and reaffirmation of Afro-Peruvian culture and history. To the MNFC, this process was inextricably linked to the fight to dismantle racial discrimination in Peru, and of forming a collective Afro-Peruvian political identity (Luciano 1996).<sup>12</sup> The MNFC also drew inspiration from Nicomedes Santa Cruz, who visited early meetings of the organization before he relocated to Spain in the late 1980s. One of the MNFC’s first

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<sup>11</sup> The palenque was in Huachipa approximately 25 kilometers east of Lima. While mention of its presence and of Francisco Congo are noted in colonial histories, detailed information is scarce (Mori, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> Wedeen (2002) addresses “performative politics” and the link between culture and collective identity formation.

activities was the restoration of the *Son de los Diablos* (Dance of the Devils) Lima Carnival.<sup>13</sup> In this period, the MNFC as an organization also became involved with the burgeoning continental Afro-Latin American movement and sent a deputation to a 1992 conference sponsored by the *Movimiento Negro Unificado* (Unified Black Movement) of Brazil.

Afro-Peruvian women were involved in the founding group of the MNFC, and the organization's manifesto had specific language devoted to equality and respect for Afro-Peruvian women. As the organization evolved, Afro-Peruvian women would undertake various leadership roles at the national level with Sofia Arizaga serving a term as President during the mid-1990s. While this is significant given that she was the only woman president in the institution's history, it is important to note that the scope of her administration did not change to the MNFC's lack of attention to women in the programming or its agenda.<sup>14</sup> In several of the *Encuentros Nacionales* (National Meetings) hosted by the movement, there were specific roundtables to discuss Black women's issues, yet, in reality, there was not a cohesive, coherent attempt to embed their gendered perspectives in all aspects of the organization's work. The women's sessions were never the main focus of the organization.

Furthermore, while the Lima-based leadership demonstrated more gender parity, the leaders of the MNFC affiliates in the provincial areas were mostly male, and women occupied supporting roles. Veteran women activists who participated in the MNFC express an awareness of the fact that women contributed significantly to the movement but did not hold important positions of power nor were they highlighted in MNFC's agenda. According to these women, this imbalance was never addressed internally and would continue throughout the life of the MNFC up until its effective dissolution in 2000.

#### **ASONEDH (Asociación Negra de Derechos Humanos)**

In 1990, the MNFC created a specialized NGO known as *Movimiento Pro Derechos Humanos del Negro* (Movement for Black Human Rights) or PROMUDEH to attract more international funding and formally dialogue with other human rights organizations. Jorge Ramírez, a Lima-based Afro-Peruvian lawyer, was selected to lead this effort. By 1993, however, Ramírez had dissociated himself from the MNFC and changed the name of the organization to its current incarnation: *Asociación Negra de Derechos Humanos* (Black Association of Human Rights, or ASONEDH). While the MNFC concentrated on grassroots organization among the Afro-Peruvian community, ASONEDH primarily concerned itself with marketing the Afro-Peruvian cause to an international audience to receive funds to execute projects. Through international exposure and contacts, ASONEDH received multiple grants from donors, including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Diakonia (a prominent Swedish development organization), and the Kellogg Foundation (Ramírez, 2006). These financial resources allowed

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<sup>13</sup> The origins of the Carnival can be traced to the Black population of colonial Lima and was traditionally celebrated in the December summer holidays (Mori, 2005). The Carnival, however, had not been held for many decades before the MNFC's revival. Public dances and festivals were held to commemorate Afro-Peruvian culture throughout the Black neighborhoods in Lima.

<sup>14</sup> The information on organizational finance and internal dynamics was compiled by both authors through participant observation, interviews and research in institutional archives over the study period beginning in 2004 with data obtained by John Thomas III as part of an institutional survey project.

ASONEDH to have a larger impact than one would otherwise expect, given the Organization's lack of substantive engagement in many of the Afro-Peruvian communities and a grassroots base.<sup>15</sup>

The organization closely followed international trends, and as international donors increasingly placed emphasis on focusing on women's issues in the region (see Ewig, 1999; Alvarez, 2014), ASONEDH created programs that would position the organization to receive these resources. As a result, the NGO received international grants from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Kellogg Foundation among others specifically for women's development initiatives. This funding oriented towards women's issues explains the various short-term projects for women including self-esteem workshops; leadership seminars focused on womanhood and race and economic empowerment through small businesses that began in this period. *La Red Nacional de Mujeres Afroartesanías* (The National Women's Afro-Artisans network, or REDMAA) is the only one of these initiatives focused on Black women's issues that still exist. Though these projects would be led by women staff members or contracted local personnel, effective control of ASONEDH's resources and programming never left the hands of Dr. Ramírez. While ASONEDH purveyed workshops and development initiatives for Afro-Peruvian women, women remained in a subordinate role within the governance and operations of the institution.

### **CEDEMUNEP (El Centro de Desarrollo de la Mujer Negra Peruana)**

CEDEMUNEP is the oldest free-standing Afro-Peruvian women's organization in existence. It was founded in 1992 by Cecelia Ramírez, a former employee of ASONEDH. CEDEMUNEP is one of the key participants in the *Afro-América XXI* (AAXI) Regional Network,<sup>16</sup> is also involved in RMAAD, and is accredited to the Organization of American States (OAS). Donors that have financed CEDEMUNEP include Global Rights, the Kellogg Foundation, Inter-American Foundation, Italian International Cooperation, MATCH International Centre, and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Throughout its history, CEDEMUNEP has researched Afro-Peruvian women and human rights in Afro-Peruvian communities. At least two *encuentros nacionales* (national encounters) have been held by the NGO that brought women together from around the country for workshops on themes ranging from domestic violence to health to democratization.

CEDEMUNEP functioned as a service provider, and its staff was not associated with grassroots organizations. While Ramírez occupied several key positions within international settings articulating on behalf of Afro-Peruvian women, she did not coordinate with other Black

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<sup>15</sup> ASONEDH continues to cast itself internationally as the dominant Black organizations in Peru and minimizes any historical link to the MNFC. Ramírez (2006) makes no mention of any link to the MNFC. When representatives of several international donors to ASONEDH were interviewed, they expressed surprise when notified of the existence and longevity of other Afro-Peruvian organizations.

<sup>16</sup> AAXXI was founded in 1998 by a group of Black activists from the United States and various Latin American nations to pressure the public and private international donor community to address Afro-Latino issues. AAXXI was headed by Michael Franklin, a Jamaican-American who was part of the Organization of Africans in the Americas. By the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa (also known as the 2001 Durban Conference), splits had emerged in AAXXI due to disagreements over Mr. Franklin's leadership practices. Dissident groups led by Uruguayan activist Romero Rodríguez formed *la Alianza Estratégica para América Latina y El Caribe* ("la Alianza"). After the 2001 Durban Conference, la Alianza became the dominant continental group, though AAXXI continued to have a visible presence in Colombia and Ecuador. When interviewed, Ms. Ramírez described the continental AAXXI process as "existing, but inactive."

women activists, and CEDEMUNEP was not associated with grassroots mobilization among Afro-Peruvian Women. Within Peru, Ramírez's activities through CEDEMUNEP were largely confined to executing projects and attending government civil society functions on behalf of Black women. For much of its existence, CEDEMUNEP and Ramírez were isolated from Black women activists affiliated with other organizations due to competition for funds as well as divisions at the international level, which played out in the domestic Peruvian context.<sup>17</sup>

### **CEDET (Centro por el Desarrollo Etnico)**

Unsuccessful attempts to gain financing from the World Bank and other international funders convinced the MNFC that a separate entity was needed to obtain funding for the movement's development programs (Muñoz, 2004). In 1999, The *Centro por el Desarrollo Etnico* (Center for Ethnic Development, or CEDET) was created to serve as the technical arm of a reformed National Francisco Congo Black Movement (MNAFC). Due to political disagreements over the 2000 elections during the Fujimori era,<sup>18</sup> CEDET severed its ties with the MNAFC and continues to function as a free-standing organization operated by several leaders of the old MNFC.<sup>19</sup>

CEDET conducts a variety of civic development and education projects throughout the Afro-Peruvian rural communities partnering with local grassroots organizations. In Lima, CEDET's work focuses on academic seminars and youth outreach. The organization is active in regional and international forums dealing with human rights and the Organization of American States (OAS). The NGO has received funding from numerous international donors including The Ford Foundation, Global Fund for Women, Kios, Minority Rights Group, Terres des Hommes, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the United States Embassy in Lima, Peru.

While CEDET was not specifically founded to articulate gender issues, the organization has advocated for holistic incorporation of women's issues in the discourse of the mainstream Afro-Peruvian movement. Additionally, while the Executive Director since its founding has been a man, Oswaldo Bilbao, most of the staff who also are part of the collective decision-making process are women. Again, we see a continuation of the same dynamic where women are not in positions of power and the agenda and projects do not reflect a specific emphasis on women's issues. Additionally, among the women in the organization, there has not been a desire to place women's issues within the institutional priorities, funding demands notwithstanding. Several prominent ex-MNFC activists including Sofia Arizaga, Lilia Mayorga, and Adriana Mandros are members of CEDET and are recognized for their individual work as women who are activists but not as activists who work on Afro-Peruvian women's issues, though this has changed as of late.

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<sup>17</sup> While the MNFC was supposed to be dissolved with the MNAFC as a successor institution, the final legal paperwork was never executed and the MNFC legally remained in existence--albeit in name only. While the persons who hold the charter claim to represent the legacy of the MNFC, their existence is disputed by members of the Afro-Peruvian movement. The MNAFC initiative was funded by the American Friends Services Committee for several years in the early 2000s, but after funding withdrew the movement became dormant though there have been several attempts to reactivate it at the national level.

<sup>18</sup> According to Mori (2005) as well as comments from activists in interviews, the first national meeting of the MNAFC resulted in support for then Congresswoman Elsa Vega who was allied with President Fujimori (1990-2000). The Lima-based activists in CEDET were opposed to Fujimori due to his human rights violations and dissolved the partnership with the MNAFC after Vega received their endorsement.

<sup>19</sup> The creation of NGOs by "grassroots movements" is a common strategy among social movements in developing countries to gain outside funding. See Keck and Sikkink (1998), Alvarez (1999), and Ewig (1999).

A key contribution of CEDET to the development of an Afro-Peruvian women's movement was its sponsorship of its Third International Seminar in 2009 titled: "*Escenarios y Perspectivas de las Mujeres Afrodescendientes en el Perú, América Latina y El Caribe: Etnicidad, Género y Político.*" (Landscapes and Perspectives of Afro-descendant women in Peru, Latin America and, the Caribbean: Ethnicity, Gender and, Politics). It featured a diverse combination of attendees that included Afro-Peruvian women academics or people with academic research focused on Afro-descendant women, women from the mainstream Peruvian feminist movement, and Afro-Peruvian women activists. This conference was the first recorded instance of an intentional reflection upon the unique position of Afro-Peruvian women within the broader Afro-descendant, feminist, and Black feminist movements. It constituted a space in which academics and grassroots activists whose work specifically homed in on Afro-Peruvian women in diverse fields such as literature, history, contemporary mobilization and the public image of Black women in Peru were able to gather and interact. While the conference proceedings were widely circulated in academic and public circles, no further collaboration among Afro-Peruvian women's activists occurred in the aftermath of the seminar.

From its formation in 1986 until its demise in 2000, the MNFC sought to create a collective Afro-Peruvian political identity based on the revitalization of Afro-Peruvian cultural traditions and promoted a discourse of that described the social exclusion that African descendants faced in both urban and rural areas as a product of racial and cultural discrimination. While women activists were key to this process, male activists occupied most of the leadership roles with women only being looked to provide leadership in circumscribed gender areas. Activist Susana Matute noted:

"I am not affirming that the leadership of our brothers was illegitimate because in the beginning, we had voted for them, we had elected them, but only they could be most leaders of the organizations. But it was sufficient that only when someone said "gender" that the women jumped to the front. Rethinking our presence and our public profile as women means that we as well must represent the levels of internal participation, the interior of our movement equally with our brothers." (2010, p. 151)

This statement elucidates a turning point for Afro-Peruvian women's involvement within the broader Black movement. Matute's commentary marks the first recorded instance of a woman activist publicly acknowledging the inequality in representation and decision-making within the Afro-Peruvian movement and stating that this dynamic was both unjust and untenable.

In this period, CEDEMUNEP would be the only organization with a woman as its executive leader. Its impact on the movement was attenuated due to the philosophical differences inherited from the conflict between different camps of activists at the international level, its focus on investigations, and to a lesser extent service provision. In CEDET, women activists did not play a vital role in orienting institutional programming towards articulating women's issues, with the notable exception of the Third International Seminar. ASONEDH would execute women's programming. However, there was little agency for women within the organization's hierarchy and operations. In this period, Afro-Peruvian women activists are establishing themselves in the movement and are participating in organizations that are slowly making uneven inroads towards addressing women's issues; however, Afro-descendant women rarely found themselves in positions of power, and their presence within their respective organizations did not result in more programming or focus on women's issues.

### **The proliferation of Movement Organizations: 2000-2015.**

From 1986 until 2000 the organized Afro-Peruvian movement consisted of a few organizations, chief among them the MNFC and ASONEDH. By 2005, however, at least fifteen independent Afro-Peruvian social movement organizations had emerged (Thomas, 2009; Thomas, 2011). A substantial number of these organizations would be founded by women. For example, *Lundú Centro de Estudios Afroperuanos* (Lundu Afro-Peruvian Study Center) was founded by Monica Carrillo and focused on promoting Afro-Peruvian cultural awareness and developing self-esteem and awareness around Black identity primarily in communities in the Chincha region. *Mujer Negra y Desarrollo* (Black Woman and Development) was founded by the ex-ASONEDH employee and politician Gloria González but had few signs of activity beyond her presence at meetings with other Afro-Peruvian women activists and broader civil society organization.<sup>20</sup>

A motivation for this growth was the failure of the older groups to formally deal with the concerns of Black women outside of workshops and short-term projects motivated by external funding. Rocio Muñoz, Afro-Peruvian activist and government official once worked for ASONEDH and left it in 2002 to start her group *Peru Afro* dedicated specifically towards uplifting the concerns of Afro-Peruvian women. She had the following to say about the emergence of the various Black women's organizations during this time:

“To that respect, we should recognize that the agendas of the Afro-Peruvian movement did not consider in the first case women from the impact of categories like racism, sexism, furthermore, race and class. Without a doubt, these have been conquests later influenced by the Afro-descendant women's movement of the regions, that questioned the invisibility of women in the interior of the movements of the fight against racism.” (2010, p. 141)

The growth of these institutions was also motivated by the substantial increase in funding available to Afro-Peruvian organizations in this period relative to the earlier periods. This growth in funding, however, was concentrated mostly among the older and more established organizations because the newer groups lacked international connections and the required professional expertise to obtain external material resources. The decision to create formalized NGOs as opposed to more informal grassroots organizations was largely dictated by the desire to gain funds and some level of institutional recognition by peers or state and international actors. For example, the *Foro Afroperuano* (Afro-Peruvian Forum) was created in 2002 to help coordinate the efforts of Afro-Peruvian activists to gain representation in the *Comisión Nacional por los Pueblos Andinos, Amazónicos y Afroperuanos* (National Commission for the Andean, Amazonian and Afro-Peruvian Peoples).<sup>21</sup>

The first formal space created specifically to facilitate discussion of Afro-Peruvian Women's issues was the *Mesa de Trabajo de la Mujer Afroperuana* (Afro-Peruvian Women's

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<sup>20</sup> The legitimacy of activists and organizations in the Afro-Peruvian movement is a contested concept. Some institutions are fronts for the activism of a single individual. Others are professional NGOs with employees who also are activists. Volunteer grassroots community organizations also exist. Thomas (2009) catalogued organizations based upon a self-reported survey of focuses and whether they were registered in *La Superintendencia Nacional de los Registros Públicos* (National Public Registry Superintendency, or SUNARP). In 2018, DAF attempted to create a national accreditation process with criteria, yet the ability of groups and activists to style themselves as legitimate representatives continues to be a key concern. Paschel (2016) notes similar concerns regarding the legitimacy of Afro-Colombian activists and their organizations.

<sup>21</sup> For more information on Afro-Peruvian involvement in CONAPA, see Greene (2007) and Thomas (2009).

Working Group). This space was established in 2001 during President Valentín Paniagua's Transitional Government and organized by Dr. Susana Villarán, Minister of *Promoción de la Mujer y del Desarrollo Humano* (Promotion of Women and Human Development, or PROMUDEH)<sup>22</sup> The Board was composed of representatives of professional NGOs and grassroots organizations. Membership ranged from legacy groups such as CEDET and CEDEMUNEP to the newer organization with staff support provided by PROMUDEH (Tocón and Petrera, 2002). It was continued under the administration of President Toledo, but all interventions had to go through the office of the First Lady Dr. Eliane Karp who wanted to channel all ethnic concerns through CONAPA. After the formal inclusion of Afro-Peruvians into the CONAPA in 2002, the *Mesa de Trabajo* was abandoned.

In 2008, CEDEMUNEP formed a group known as the *Colectiva Afroperuana* (Afro-Peruvian Woman's Collective) and was joined by Afro-Peruvian Women who worked with other groups to stage a *plantón* (protest) to commemorate the 2007 earthquake that struck the Ica region and call attention to the slow reconstruction of the Afro-Peruvian communities that were impacted.<sup>23</sup> Many of the participants in this march had also worked together in the Roundtable. This mobilization not only was the first time that different groups had come together to press claims against the Peruvian state in a public setting. After the march, however, CEDET and other groups would withdraw formally from the Afro-Peruvian Woman's Collective because the effort was viewed less like a collaboration among groups and more as a project of CEDEMUNEP.

By 2010, the previous participants in the Roundtable decided to reactivate the formal Roundtable after a series of dialogues with Afro-Peruvian Women conducted by the NGO CEDEMUNEP as part of a project funded by the Kellogg Foundation (Thomas, 2011). The board consisted of 16 women representatives of many community organizations from the provinces and Lima-based professional NGOs. The Peruvian state was represented by persons from MIMDES and CONAPA's successor agency, *el Instituto para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Andinos, Amazónicos y Afroperuanos* (The Institute for the Development of Andean, Amazonian, and Afro-Peruvian peoples, or INDEPA). A major achievement of the group the execution of a study about Afro-Peruvian women to generate a comprehensive development program for this population and give policy recommendations to MIMDES. Although the project was completed, the policies were unable to be evaluated and implemented because of sudden changes to the Peruvian bureaucracy brought about by the new Presidential administration of Ollanta Humala in 2011.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> PROMUDEH was created in 1996 and renamed in 2002 as *Ministerio de la Mujer y Desarrollo Social* (Ministry of Women and Social Development; MIMDES). In 2012, as part of a cabinet reorganization it was renamed *Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables* (Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, or MIMP). The core focus of the ministry did not change despite these shifts in nomenclature.

<sup>23</sup> On August 15, 2007 an earthquake measuring 8.0 on the moment magnitude scale hit the central coast of Peru killing 519 persons and devastating structures throughout the region including the historic heart of Afro-Peruvian culture—El Carmen District, Chincha Province.

<sup>24</sup> Part of this restructuring process was a newly formed *Ministerio de Cultura* (Ministry of Culture). While the Roundtable continued in a consulting role, a separate directorate in the Ministry of Culture, *La Dirección de Políticas para Población Afroperuanas* (Directorate of Policies for the Afro-Peruvian Population, or DAF) was given the responsibility to lead national government engagement with Afro-Peruvian issues. Afro-Peruvian women have occupied a variety of roles within DAF and two have served as its director: Rocio Muñoz and Susana Matute.



## “Presencia y Palabra”<sup>25</sup>

The work and headway made by Afro-Peruvian women to draw attention to women’s issues and include women’s perspectives in the Black movement and demand that race be considered in the feminist movement would come to a head in 2014. In an unprecedented act of collective action catalyzed by yet another instance of superficial inclusion in feminist discussions, Afro-Peruvian women from organizations in the Black movement alongside other women of African descent from the American diaspora created *Presencia y Palabra: Mujeres Afroperuanas* (Presence and Voice: Afro-Peruvian Women).

The EFLAC meeting of 2014 took place in Lima, Peru thirty-one years after the second *encuentro* in 1983. Afro-Peruvian women were in attendance; they came representing different organizations, including CEDET (Adriana Mandros, Sofia Arizaga, and Lilia Mayorga) and CEDEMUNEP (Cecelia Ramírez). Additionally, others, including women who formed part of *La Mesa de Trabajo de la Mujer Afroperuana*, and independent and important feminist figures in the Afro-Peruvian women’s movement, including Delia Zamudio and Rocio Muñoz were present. It became immediately clear that although the EFLAC theme and publicity spoke about diversity and featured images of dark-skinned women with *turbantes*, turbans or head wraps, a cultural symbol of African heritage worn by women all over the region, to create a visual display of inclusion while the program content had once again excluded them. Upon discovering that the *encuentro* had no programming on the subject of Afro-Latin Americans, these women quickly made contact with other Afro-descendant women in attendance from countries such as the Dominican Republic, Canada, Brazil, Colombia, and the USA who were similarly outraged that the claims they had been making since the first Lima *encuentro* had still not been addressed. There was an overwhelming sense of upset over the co-opting of Black women’s images for a cause that did not serve them.

This group of approximately thirty women wrote a statement denouncing their systemic exclusion from EFLAC programming, which they read when they stormed the stage on the final morning of the conference. Wearing headwraps, they recited Victoria Santa Cruz’s poem “*Me Gritaron Negra*,” before one of the members read aloud the statement signed by *Presencia y Palabra: Mujeres Afrodescendientes*, a name they chose to represent their demand to have their voices heard in addition to being physically represented. They later marched together in the parade through the streets of Lima playing traditional Afro-Peruvian instruments on November 25, the Day of No Violence Against Women. Furthermore, they vowed to ensure that Afro-descendant women had programming for the following *encuentro* in Uruguay in 2018, and to continue the newly formed collective in Lima.

This moment and the collective born of it represent major advances in activist articulation and mobilization towards generating a Black women’s movement in the country. *Presencia y Palabra* has since grown to include members of other organizations. While CEDEMUNEP ceased to participate shortly after the EFLAC event, several Afro-Peruvian women who belong to other activist organizations have joined. They include: Gloria Gonzalez from *Mujer Negra y Desarrollo*, Susana Matute and Margarita Ramírez from CEDET, and Carmen Espinoza from *Manuela Ramos*. Among the independent veteran activists who have joined are: Rebeca Godos, Liliana Asin, and Madeleine John. Younger activists include: Elizabeth Pflucker, a lesbo-feminist with extensive knowledge of human rights, and Sharún Gonzales, who was trained in CEDET’s youth

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<sup>25</sup> This section is based on data collected via participant observation by Eshe Lewis. She is a founding member of *Presencia y Palabra* who was present at the 2014 EFLAC and during the establishment of the collective from 2015 through to 2016, then for 8 months in 2018. She currently continues to participate from outside of Peru.

school and was a pioneer of a youth group called *Makungu para el Desarrollo* (Makungu for Desarrollo).<sup>26</sup>

Together they have engaged in a process of collective reflection and created an agenda. This document addresses issues of territory, identity, Black feminism, and the historical and current realities of Afro-descendants in Peru, including the discrimination they face as women of African descent in an Andean country that is only beginning to recognize its African legacies. Black womanhood has been a central axis of the collective's identity; the members have discussed and critiqued Black feminisms from other countries in the Americas and reflected on their own lived experiences to create a feminist ideology and praxis that specifically represents their contexts and needs. They have specifically called attention to the gender imbalances within the Black movement and considered how and when to work with other Black women's organizations to develop working relationships that can allow for the possibility of meaningful dialog and collaborations in the future. There was also a marked interest in creating a feminist, anti-racist school for Black women to continue the process of articulation and knowledge transfer to help participants in their own activist ventures. *Presencia y Palabra* has also used social media to partake in cyber-activism by using their Facebook page to disseminating original and forwarded images and announcements. They have staunchly supported Afro-Peruvian women activists when they face discrimination, and use important figures like Victoria Santa Cruz, and feminist symbolism to talk about gender and racial inequality with a broader audience.

This collective has ushered in a new, incredibly public organization of Afro-descendant women who are in dialogue with one another in their own space and on their own terms. While most members remain dedicated to their work in their respective feminist and Afro-Peruvian organizations and individual professions, *Presencia y Palabra* represents a Black woman-centered movement that allows for crucial cross-organizational and inter-generational convergence. This organizing has set the stage for future interactions with the government on behalf of Afro-descendant women, in communities at the national level, and potential participation in regional networks like RMAAD.

## Conclusion

Afro-Peruvian women have a long history of participating in activism as Afro-descendants, and as women, as members of their communities, marginalized peoples of their nation, and in conjunction with regional efforts for social justice. They are well-versed in the discourses and practical aspects of life for Afro-descendant women and continue to work diligently to better the conditions for all even as they maintain their positions within trans-national networks. Additionally, they have been informed by their participation in identity movements and are using the skills they developed in grassroots and NGO organizations, and through interactions with the government to center and advance their agendas.

For women of African descent, Victoria Santa Cruz continues to signify the value and importance of their presence and work on issues affecting African descendants in their country. Her work also symbolizes the work of Afro-Peruvian women; it is labor so deeply integral and interwoven into the foundation of the movements they represent that it often goes unrecognized. She is one of many women who inspire continued efforts to advance a Black women's movement. Santa Cruz was mourned and honored upon her passing at the age of ninety-one in August of 2014.

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<sup>26</sup> *Makungu* is a Swahili word meaning "plan" or "thought."

Her formidable work to produce and preserve Afro-Peruvian culture and identity has been recognized by the Ministry of Culture and by the Afro-Peruvian people.

Currently, Black women are individually and collectively some of the most active in the Afro-Peruvian movement. *Presencia y Palabra* has become a vector through which some of these women have become protagonists of their movement. To this end, in May of 2018, *Presencia y Palabra* hosted the country's first feminist encounter for Afro-Peruvian women. They invited key women leaders from the northern and southern rural regions, and a variety of different organizations. Accompanied by black women activists from Brazil and Chile, they participated in a two-day, inter-generational event that featured discussions and activities about: cultural and political visibility, ancestral knowledge, trauma and healing, territory, human rights, racism in the Peruvian feminist movement, sexual diversity, and diasporic issues for black women. This event provided an opportunity for women from different Afro-Peruvian communities that have very different historical processes of identity formation across the country to meet, reflect, and connect, in hopes of laying the groundwork for future collaborations and learning. The feedback from this encounter was promising, and the collective has expressed great interest in realizing other events in the future. Though *Presencia y Palabra* does not have plans to institutionalize nor has it articulated much with government entities about Afro-Peruvian women's issues, the collective has since succeeded in creating and completing its first school for Afro-Peruvian women. These dynamic interactions open a world of possibilities for future collaborative work that will hopefully continue the task of strengthening and expanding the black Peruvian women's movement.

### List of Acronyms

ACEJUNEP	La Asociación Cultural para la Juventud Negra Peruana
ASONEDH	La Asociación Negra de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos
CEDET	El Centro de Desarrollo Étnico
CEDEMUNEP	El Centro de Desarrollo de la Mujer Negra Peruana
CONAPA	La Comisión Nacional por los Pueblos Andinos, Amazónicos y Afroperuanos
DAF	La Dirección de Políticas para Población Afroperuana
EFLAC	El Encuentro Feminista de Latinoamérica y el Caribe
INAPE	El Instituto de Investigaciones Afroperuanas
INDEPA	El Instituto para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Andinos, Amazónicos y Afroperuanos
MIMDES	El Ministerio de la Mujer y Desarrollo Social
MIMP	El Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables
MNFC	El Movimiento Negro Francisco Congo
MNAFC	El Movimiento Nacional Francisco Congo
PROMUDEH	El Ministerio para la Promoción de la Mujer y del Desarrollo Humano
RMAA	La Red Nacional de Mujeres Afroartesanías
RMAAD	La Red de Mujeres Afrolatinoamericanas, Afrocaribeñas y de la Diáspora

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