

A photograph of three indigenous children from Ecuador. The child in the foreground is a young girl with dark hair, wearing a yellow and pink striped headband and a necklace of white shells. She has red face paint on her cheeks and forehead. Behind her are two other children, one of whom is also wearing a pink headband and has red face paint. They are all looking towards the camera with serious expressions. The background is slightly blurred, showing an outdoor setting.

**AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND
INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES: THE
IMPACT OF POST-NEOLIBERAL
POLICIES ON REDUCING RACIAL
INEQUALITY IN ECUADOR**

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Race in Post-Colonial Ecuador



Ethnic make-up of Ecuador: 72% are mestizos; 7% Montubian; 7% Afro-Ecuadorian and 7% indigenous people; 12% white – numbers disputed.



Inequality in literacy rates and years of schooling



Income inequalities: Continued persecution after the end of slavery (1822)



Continued persecution of indigenous communities, based on religion and race.



Structural adjustment policies

Post-Neoliberal Policies



- Rafael Correa (2007-2013): ‘El Revolución Ciudadana’ (the ‘Citizen Revolution’)
- Political stability and the strengthening of the state: El ‘Plan del Buen Vivir’ (the ‘Plan for Good Living’)
- Changes in 2008 Constitution (implemented 2009):
 - Article 2 of the Constitution: The State shall **adopt affirmative action measures** that **promote real equality** for the benefit of the rights-bearers who are in a situation of inequality.
 - **Policy of affirmative action for Afro-Ecuadorian and Indigenous communities in public sector employment and higher education.**

Methodology

Literature review

10 interviews/surveys

Mix of urban/rural

Mix of male/female

Range of ages

Kichwa and Otavalo tribes

General questions about racial discrimination

General questions about government actions

Questions about affirmative action policies – multiple framing

Results from Literature Review



Supports idea that there has been a positive impact



Increase in college access



Very limited increase in representation in government jobs

Results from Interviews

Mixed responses

- Indigenous communities did had varied responses on the extent to which they had been discriminated against

Inconsistent responses

- The majority of respondents stated supported quotas in employment and higher education
- The majority of respondents said that access to higher education should be based solely on merit.
- Some respondents stated that their race did not suffer from discrimination, but went on to give examples of when they had been discriminated against.

Lack of understanding about reparations

- Many respondents had never heard of the term 'reparations'
- Some respondents supported the idea of reparations, while others were opposed.

Knowledge that the government was working to tackle racial inequalities but not how

- 90% believed the government had changed its policies towards racial inequality in the last 50 years.
 - 75% had never heard of affirmative action policies
 - Only one respondent referenced the 2008 Constitution
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Respondents put a great focus on education as a driver of social change:

- “At the moment, race does not matter. The important thing is academic preparation.”
- Education as both an individual effort and a government responsibility

But this was also something that respondents brought up as a positive action that the government was taking



Limitations

Geographic limitations

Sample size

Only two tribes (out of 14)

Access to tribes

Language limitations

Recordings

Ability to talk to government officials

My role in the interview process

Areas for Future Research



Consider the impact on Afro-Ecuadorian communities



How much does education impact rates of inequality?



More extensive surveying



More comprehensive research into other outcomes



A comparative study across post-neoliberal policies in South America

Photo Credits

1. Andy Isaacson, *The New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/17/travel/17Ecuador.html>
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