MONÇÕES
REVISTA DE RELAÇÕES INTERNACIONAIS DA UFGD

DOI: 10.30612/rmufgd.v11i21.16530

Interview with Jacqueline Braveboy-Wagner

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Abstract: Jacqueline Braveboy-Wagner is Professor Emeritus at the City University of New York (CUNY). In addition to her research work specializing in foreign policy, diplomacy and development, particularly with respect to small states (and specifically Caribbean states), Prof. Braveboy-Wagner was also the first Caribbean woman to serve as president of the Caribbean Studies Association (1992-3), and served as the United Nations-NGO representative of the International Studies Association from 1995 to 2010. She was also one of the founders of the Global South Caucus of the International Studies Association (GSCIS) in 2012.

Key-words: Global South; Global IR; Global South IR

How would you describe the idea of a Global South in IR?

It's not just a matter of there being a Global South in international relations (ir) or, I presume, by capitalizing IR you mean the STUDY of international relations. To me there is a Global South in a very real territorial context. I do not much care whether the name has changed from "third world" or "less developed" to Global South to suit updated global circumstances. There is still, to me, a group of countries, former colonies or quasi-colonies, at various stages of economic growth but developing nonetheless, countries that have been neglected in both ir and IR, and those are the countries that I have always focused on. Of course you cannot focus on the territorial dimension without also considering the movement of breakdown of borders, the people and ideas across boundaries, and non-material matters of identity, ideology, and culture, but for me, you must begin by understanding the historical role of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean in international relations, then bringing this up to the present *mélange*, never losing sight of the search for agency and voice for the South in ir.

Why Global South IR instead of Global IR?

I do not question the broad intent of GIR. The concept wishes to speak to inclusion and diversity in the study of IR. I DO have a little English nitpick, if you will, in that one assumes that International Relations, that is, the study of relations among nations, is by its very nature GLOBAL, but I presume that is the very point of GIR: GIR is saying that the study of IR is *not* really international in that it is concentrated only on a few nations (or something along those lines). Hopefully the intent is at the end to have a new IR without having to add "global." Anyway, I consider my focus to be one *WITHIN* GIR, and that is "Global South IR." This refers to the international relations of/involving/centering on the global south. As someone who has been studying IR for 50 years, I still believe in two aspects of GS constitution: the first, is that these countries have agency, that is their very own conceptions of their importance and interests, never mind that they always know that they are operating at a disadvantage in the global hierarchy; and second, these countries have been struggling since their independence to be taken seriously in world affairs, to go beyond being just useful allies and targets of great power machinations, and they aspire to have an equal voice in ir. As part of that, of course they have been struggling NOT to be placed on the low rungs of the global hierarchy , which has meant achieving sustainable development and strengthening themselves politically and yes, militarily if need be. By focusing on a global south IR, one is also looking at what *unites* these

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former colonies, rather than what divides them. Yes, countries and regions are different, but if they share a desire to succeed in a certain way, let's concentrate on what strategies they hold in common (multilateralism for example).

You are an Emeritus Professor, tenured at CUNY, a university that hosts several Global South students, plus you founded the International Studies Association's Global South Caucus, and you are originally from Trinidad and Tobago. You have a lot of experience bridging Global North and Global South realities in Academia. Why did you embrace this challenge? What is the main lesson you have learned after so many years playing this role?

Well, to some extent I answered this in the last question. I come from a small country so my focus in IR (which was a new field at my home university in the 1970s, and, in my case, my program was a cooperative endeavor initiated by the Geneva Institute of International Studies) has always been on the disadvantaged – the *very* disadvantaged in my case because I was studying what were then called *micro*states. At the time, because of the nature of the program I attended, I also had an intimate view of the importance of having good diplomatic strategies and well-trained people to promote and wage these strategies. I maintain that academics like me, who move to the north to further their studies and career but do not lose their connection to the South, *should* feel a responsibility to bring the ideas and perceptions of the South to the North and that is what I have done. I started here by absorbing all about IR as taught in the North, including the prevailing methodologies and epistemologies, and trying to apply them to my own regional study. Over time, as I got over the necessity of tenure and promotion in a field dominated by northern approaches, I could expand my own views which have always included a heavy dose of anti-colonialism, anti-modernization theory, and so on.

Teaching in a university with GS students is helpful in that you can discuss events and approaches that are not particularly interesting to or understood by students elsewhere, in my case in Arizona and Ohio, but make no mistake, New York students have proven to be a challenge nevertheless. The more "radical" ones are more interested in sociology, anthropology, ethnic studies, race, history, certainly not international relations which was described to me early on by an ethnic studies professor as a field for "white, conservative men" (so why bother

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to study it?) Even in the Caribbean Studies Association which I served as president back in the 1990s, there was never a big interest in IR, the field as we know it, although much of what the CSA focused on could be included in international, especially cultural, studies. Over time, and especially recently, the field itself has become more welcoming to alternative ideas. Students (at the graduate level) are asking now for more non-Western seminars as well as advice on how to do non-Western research. Still, I would not say that there has been *tremendous* progress in terms of changes to the curriculum, for example. Despite these handicaps, I continued doing what I could over the years. Starting the GS Caucus at ISA was a part of this effort. I had served as ISA UN's representative for more than ten years and at the UN you can count on a perception of the world that accommodates non-West concerns. In starting the caucus, I was driven by an understanding that the GS "problem" in IR was multipronged: there was the field itself, a field that ignored much of what was going on in the "rest"; and, there were the meager academic rewards of being a non-West scholar – doing research that adversely affects chances of promotion and tenure and having students who are not happy to have non-US/non-European professors. The caucus was intended to address these and other issues via networking and mentorship, the constitution of region-specific panels and roundtables at conferences, and encouraging and promoting publications by members.

The only way to succeed in these endeavors is to have a lot of stick-to-it-iveness. One needs persistence and clever maneuvering if we non-Western scholars are to get and retain jobs in the field. And those who succeed need to mentor younger scholars, encourage them to stick to the work they want to do on the GS, but be aware that the predominant "traditional" approaches must also be mastered. You cannot critique what you don't know.

As a Black woman whose career flourished in an era where inclusivity was not deemed as important as today, how much progress do you think the field has actually made? How do you view the concentration of opportunities in people from the Global South who identify as white and/or are usually native English speakers?

Again, to some extent I have answered that in the last response. Just add "Black" to the mix and all the problems are worsened. IR, and the American academy as a whole, continues to be dominated by White scholars. Here is my take on my own university: three-year (2017-21) figures regarding the diversity of CUNY (a university system that is, overall, trending toward

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being very Latino in terms of its student body located on about 20 campuses), show that 18.5 percent of professors are Black, 10.5 percent Hispanic, and 14.6 percent Asian/Pacific. But that is not high for a university that is majority students of color. Moreover, there are only 7 Black distinguished professors (out of 121) and 180 Professors (out of 2,207) and that includes visiting lines, substitutes and research titles. And if you look more closely you will find that Black professors are concentrated in certain colleges (we have 20 of them) and look even more closely, and you will find that they are concentrated in certain departments and programs as well (https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/hr/recruitment-diversity/statistics--and-reports/; the department/program statistics are not in this report). As for me, I have been the only Black professor in my department for more than 35 years. When I became a full professor in 1992, I was apparently (according to an American Political Science Association [APSA] report) one of only a tiny handful of Black women who were full professors. I do not think there are that many more today. In fact, recent APSA data shows that less than 5 percent of its members are Black (/https://www.apsanet.org/Portals/54/diversity%20and%20inclusion%20prgms/DIV%20reports/APSA%20Dashboard%20Data%20report%20-%202020%20.pdf?ver=2020-07-13-002957-530). I cannot locate comparable disaggregated ISA data but I can guess that there must be even fewer in IR. So this answers your question about how much progress has been made: very little.

I cannot speak exactly to the "concentration of opportunities in people from the GS who are white." The fact is that the academy (in the US) is dominated by Whites as a whole, and that includes, by the way, Europeans who come "over the pond" for employment. One issue for us scholars from the South has also always been that White scholars *do* have global interests, especially in comparative politics, and usually, historically, have an employment advantage over those of us coming from Africa, Asia, or Latin America, except in ethnic studies departments. To your point, though, having been on many hiring committees, I certainly think that those who speak English fluently are going to be hired before those who do not. (I have also seen students react negatively to accents that they deem hard to understand so hiring committees may be aware of this.) All of that suggests that White, English speakers are indeed, preferred by search committees in our field (not necessarily in science and engineering where pure skill trumps accents!). Of course this also has to do with Whites hiring Whites because of racial familiarity (=potential collegiality). A White GS person who is doing non-Western work may be seen as somehow more "familiar" that a Black or non-White Latino person doing the same work. I HAVE observed that White Latinos seem to fit in better than others.

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Research has shown it is less difficult to publish in the Web of Science journals if you write about issues geopolitically relevant to the West and through Western lenses. You have extensive research on the Foreign Policy of Small States. How did you manage to overcome this barrier?

Yes, it is difficult to publish in major journals if you do not use the traditional methodologies and address issues of interest to the West and to Western academics. My works on the Caribbean were always destined for regional journals, although fortunately, there were a few outstanding Latin American journals at the time published in the US (for example, the *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, and *Latin American Research Review*), and reviewers for tenure and promotion liked to see those. Some other journals such as the *American Journal of International Law* that dealt with issues I researched (Venezuela-Guyana Boundary Dispute) were not regional. But I found little luck with ISA and APSA publications. Reviewers always reacted negatively when I talked about aspects such as the potential for economic cooperation among developing nations or the adverse role of the international financial institutions, or theories of dependency and so on. *Third World Quarterly* helped when it came into being but did not initially get what would be called today a "high impact" rating. As a result, my focus quickly turned to books when publishers started soliciting me, especially since there was nothing much written on the subjects I was interested in teaching. So in that vein I began by publishing my *Interpreting the Third World* and just went on and on after that.

Of course it is far more difficult today because of the emphasis on a few high impact journals. When I review people around the world for promotion, they almost always now highlight *exactly* how high impact the journals are (provide all the statistics)! For me, the quality of the article is much more important so I try to ignore just the impact figures but it is the reality. As a reviewer for some of these very journals, I will say that there are some opportunities now for non-Western approaches but it is important to understand what kind of articles the journal is looking for, use sound and convincing methodology whatever it is, write coherently, and use a lot of data or marshal the historical proof well. I also still recommend writing a lot in regional journals and publishing book chapters etc. After all, it is the body of work that makes a person known and successful, not just ONE high impact journal article.

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