

KEPT IN, KEPT OUT:

THE FORMATION OF RACIAL IDENTITY IN
BRAZIL, 1930 - 1937

BY

VERONICA ARMSTRONG

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the roles of historian Gilberto Freyre and the São Paulo black press in the formation of racial identity in Brazil. In Casa Grande e Senzala, published in 1933, Freyre presented a hypothesis of Brazilian national identity based on positive interpretations of slavery and miscegenation. His emphasis on racial harmony met with the approval of Getúlio Vargas, a president intent on the unification of Brazilian society. With Vargas' backing, racial democracy became Brazilian national identity. Supporters included the black press which welcomed an idea that brought blacks into definitions of Brazilianness. Yet, blacks were embracing an interpretation of Brazilian identity that would replace a growing black racial awareness. Reasons for the undermining of black racial consciousness and the enshrining of racial democracy as Brazilian national identity emerge in an overview of shifts occurring during the first decades of the twentieth century. The forces of mass immigration, negative evaluations of Brazil by scientific racism, and the nation-building politics of Vargas affected the elite minority and the poverty-stricken majority of Brazilians, but in differing ways. For while economic stability and national pride were the goals of the former, research suggests that survival was the paramount aim of the latter. Addressing the needs of both groups, the adoption of racial democracy as national ideology in the late 1930s maintained elite privilege, defused the potential of racial unrest, and promised social mobility to the masses.

Benefits to the largely-black masses, however, had strings attached. Social mobility depended on their acting "white" and becoming "white" through miscegenation. In the face of desperate poverty, blacks had few options and assimilation seemed a way to move beyond their low socio-economic status. Furthermore, contrasts with American segregation convinced black writers that battling discrimination had to be secondary to the economic survival of their community. The thesis concludes by seeking to

explain the paradox of a society characterised by many foreigners and most Brazilians as a racial paradise from the 1930s to the 1970s even though Brazilian reality evinces gross inequality between the small Europeanised elite and the large black and mixed-race underclass.

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NOTE ON PORTUGUESE TERMS

The following list is provided as a general guide to meaning of Portuguese terms used within the text. In particular, such usage permits the writer to deal more adequately with the ambiguous nature of racial terminology in Brazil. This ambiguity is explained in detail in chapter three; but for the moment the terms serve to initiate the reader into a world in which "black" and "white" are not immutable characteristics of identification. (All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.)

Amante negríssima—very black female lover

Babá—nanny.

Branco—white or tanned with Caucasian phenotype.

Brasileridade—Brazilianness

Casa Grande e Senzala—the Big House and Slave Quarters.

Favelas—irregular slum developments found in wealthy and poor areas. See *subúrbios*.

Frente Negra—Black Front, an organisation formed by blacks to fight for civil rights in the 1930s.

Liberto—manumitted or freed slave.

Maconha—marijuana.

Mães pretas—slave wet nurses.

Modernismo—autochthonous literary movement centred in São Paulo in the 1920s.

Moreno, morena—brown skinned person.

Mulato or Mestiço—mulatto, racially mixed person.

Negro—black, Afro-Brazilian or dark-skinned Brazilian of African descent whose phenotype is not Caucasian.

Povo—the common people.

Subúrbios—working class and poor districts that are usually distant from wealthy areas.

PREFACE

In 1973 the renowned sociologist and historian Gilberto Freyre attended the opening night of a new restaurant in Recife, capital of the northeastern state of Pernambuco in Brazil. The restaurant's name was *Casa Grande e Senzala*, and its walls were decorated with whips, leg irons and other instruments of torture. Waiters dressed as slaves served the "masters" seated at their tables. The restaurant, named after Freyre's first book, fittingly served as the gathering place for his admirers to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of its publication.¹ In 1933, Freyre's book *Casa Grande e Senzala* launched his career as the foremost interpreter of Brazilian racial identity and, until recently, was the primary source for information on slavery and the formation of the family in Brazil.²

When a relative newcomer to Brazil, I read a newspaper account of the opening and I recall my shock.³ I thought it bizarre, perverse even, that slavery and torture could be adopted as appropriate decor for anything other than a movie set or a museum. Moreover, why would a respected academic like Freyre attend the opening ceremonies? This question was one of many related to the issue of race that remained without an answer. I continually saw discrepancies between the rhetoric of Brazil as a racially-mixed society without racial prejudices, an example of tolerance to the rest of the world, and the daily reality of subtle but undeniably prejudicial behaviour and language. I saw an enormous economic and social gap between the privileged minority who were predominately white and the poverty-stricken majority who were predominately black or of mixed race.⁴ Yet I was told by middle-class friends—of all racial backgrounds but mostly of light skin—that no racial barriers blocked social mobility in Brazil and that poverty had no connection to skin colour. If the overwhelming majority of the poor were black, that was because slavery had been abolished relatively "recently." Besides, they said, all Brazilians would eventually benefit from economic development.

And in 1972, economic prospects for Brazil seemed excellent. I was not critical. Young and naïve, I knew nothing about politics and very little about the history of Brazil; and rigid censorship of all communication media and school curricula helped keep me in a state of ignorance.⁵ Overall, I was

¹ Eduardo Galeano, *Memory of Fire* trans. Cedric Belfrage, (New York:Pantheon Books, 1988) 217.

² Gilberto Freyre, *Casa Grande e Senzala* 13th ed., (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1966) An English version is *Masters and Slaves* 2nd ed., (New York: Alfred E. Knopf, 1963).

³ I lived in Brazil first as an immigrant and later as a naturalised Brazilian between 1972 and 1989.

⁴ Many years later, in a reference to the Black Brazil conference held at the University of Florida in 1991, the New York Times published an article with the title "So, if it's Black Brazil, why is elite so white?" *The New York Times* 24 Sept. 1992, A4.

⁵ In 1969, the military dictatorship prohibited the publication of news of Indian unrest, the black movement, racial prejudice and the death squads. As detailed in further chapters, prominent academics who protested the endemic racial inequality of Brazilian society were forced into retirement or exile. Darcy Ribeiro, *Aos Francos e Barrancos, Como O Brasil Deu No Que*

simply enjoying the experience of a new life in an exciting place. The first few years I was enchanted by the beauty of the country and warmed by the open friendliness of Brazilian people. I learned Portuguese and made many Brazilian friends. I now thank one of these friends for his quiet comments on his life as a *mulato* child of the *favelas* for they revealed a hidden side to the easy-going social relations that I had admired amongst all Brazilians. And I began to pay more attention. Throughout the seventies and much of the eighties, decades of deepening economic crisis, I continued to hear Brazilians of all skin colours and social statuses declare that no discrepancy existed between the “official” version of colour-blind social distinction and the worsening socio-economic reality of the poor, largely non-white, component of the population.⁶ If I questioned disparaging remarks, made by blacks and whites alike, about very curly hair or very dark skin, I received only indirect answers implying that the questions were misguided.⁷ My North-American ideas of racial identity, it seems, meant that I would never be able to really understand the concept of *brasileiridade* that prevented racial conflict by avoiding separate racial identification. Constant comparison was made between the United States and Brazil to emphasize the benefits of traditionally harmonious race relations in Brazil.

Such answers did not satisfy me, and after leaving Brazil in 1989 I decided to study them more systematically. I first began to study the historic background of racial prejudice. This thesis, then, is written to contribute further knowledge of race as part of an attempt to understand my adopted land. But the issue of race is also important more broadly in today’s world of increasingly mixed populations caused by dislocation and migration. Additionally, I hope it will provide resource material to Araní Santana of Ilê Ayê, an Afro-Brazilian group in Salvador, Bahia. Araní is involved in many projects aimed at fostering racial pride and development. One project, the formulating of school curricula on black history, plays an important role. Its intent is to give students a more accurate picture of black history so that they can develop a sense of identity based on factual rather than mythical versions of Brazil’s past. Demythologizing Brazilian race relations matters, for myths provide unstable foundations for the construction of equitable societies.

Equal rights of education and citizenship are the demands of the National Movement of Street Boys and Girls established in 1985. Sixty years after the same demands were made by the writers of the black press, these young children take to the streets to protest their abandonment by society. In

Deu 3rd. ed., (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Guanabara, 1985) note 2022, 1969. n.p. This title can be loosely translated as “By Jolts and Steep Gulleys, How Brazil Turned Out the Way It Did.”

⁶ The image of Brazil presented in official government tourist brochures and government-sponsored television ad campaigns was that of a country with harmonious relations amongst all Brazilians of all colours and social levels. Racial democracy was the bedrock of the military regime’s Brazilianness.

⁷ Tightly curled napped hair (*carapina*) is often called *cabelo ruim* (bad hair.)

admiration and respect, I dedicate my work to them as they are the descendants of the men and women whose struggle for equal rights is the focus of my thesis.

KEPT IN, KEPT OUT: THE QUESTION OF BRAZILIANNES AND BLACK SOLIDARITY 1930- 1937

What you see is not necessarily what you get when you first visit a city like Rio de Janeiro and see Brazilians of all colours mingling in the streets and on the beaches, laughing and joking with one another. You will not see the same intermingling as you move from those public and democratic spaces and head to either hillside *favelas*, distant *subúrbios* or opulent penthouse parties and country clubs. Observers, however, cannot be blamed for their conclusions in the past that racism did not seem to exist in Brazil. When compared to the legalised segregation of the United States and South Africa, Brazilian society seemed racially integrated. For one thing, no laws restricted the movement of blacks. For another, all but the most elite levels of Brazilian society in much of the country are, or appear to be, racially mixed. Nevertheless, while most Brazilians maintain they are “colour blind,” an invisible system of unspoken rules has kept blacks “in their place.”⁸

For most of the twentieth century this system functioned under the ironic name of racial democracy. Racial democracy characterized Brazil as a country where racial attitudes had been shaped by centuries of close racial contact. It was, most Brazilians argued, a society in which social status was not related to skin colour. Yet by 1993, Brazil was the country with the world’s most inequitable distribution of wealth and *black* in almost all cases has been synonymous with *poor* in Brazil.⁹ It is

⁸ Rebecca Reichmann, “Brazil’s Denial of Race,” *NACLA* 28.6, May/June (1995) : 35-45. One significant example of this denial is seen in the diplomatic service. The *Itamaraty* (Brazilian Foreign service) has not had a single black high-level minister in all its 172 years of existence. By 1994 only one black had ever occupied a position in a foreign posting and he was chosen in the early sixties from society rather than from the Diplomatic Corps. “O Itamaraty é racista,” *Veja* 15 June 1994 : 142. The civil rights movements in the U.S., the fall of apartheid in South Africa, and the independence of many African nations caused attention to focus more carefully on the situation of blacks in Brazil after the 60s. The most complete survey on racial attitudes ever was carried out in Brazil in 1995 (5,081 interviews in 121 cities). It showed that while 87% of the non-black respondents manifested prejudicial attitudes with regard to racial questions, only 10% would recognise prejudice in what they had said or done. “O Racismo Cordial,” *Folha de São Paulo* June 25 1995, 1-16. There has not been significant change since these articles were published.

⁹ For discussion of income disparity, see Maria Clara Couto Soares, “Who Benefits and Who Bears the Damage under World Bank/IMF-Led Policies?” *Fighting for the Soul of Brazil* eds. Kevin Danaher and Michael Schellenberger (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995) 13. Also see George Reid Andrews, Emilia Viotti da Costa and Franklin W. Knight, Commentary, “George Reid Andrews, ‘Blacks and Whites in São Paulo, Brazil, 1888-1988,’” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 29.2 (1994) : 141-158 and “Onwards and Downwards in Brazil,” *The Economist*, 13 Nov. 1993 : 19. For statistics, see Nelson

wrong, therefore, to claim that social mobility is a function of wealth when dark skin colour correlates with lack of it and when social acceptance and high social status for blacks are rare.¹⁰ For this reason, social scientists today centre their interest on the mythological qualities of the thesis of racial democracy. Both Brazilian and foreign scholars view Gilberto Freyre, the “Father of Racial Democracy,” as a key source for understanding the inner workings of Brazilian society, especially with regard to racial issues. However, few studies have focused on the valuable perspectives to be gained by looking at black sources. This thesis repositions the historical lens away from solely traditional sources to look more closely at the active role of blacks in the running of a black press and their influence on the making of Brazilian identity in the early years of the century.

The search for national identity

The first decades of the twentieth century were a time of intense examination of national ideology as Brazil entered a new phase of urban industrialization that challenged ways of thinking that had strongly entrenched roots in rural plantations and their long history of slavery. Elites lamented the country’s backwardness and yearned for Brazil to become a progressive capitalist society. Two factors in particular caused race to form a critical element in this questioning of national identity. On the one hand, the abolition of slavery in 1888 was still fresh in the national memory and on the other, European scientific racist thought permeated intellectual circles. From the 1930s, however, the idea of racial democracy neutralised the racial question on an academic level, and its adoption as national ideology led to a transformation of the way Brazilians viewed themselves and were viewed by the rest of the world.

Social historian Gilberto Freyre presented the theory of racial democracy in his first book, *Casa Grande e Senzala*, published in 1933. Freyre argued that interracial contact and cultural fusion throughout Brazilian history had resulted in one mixed-race identity for all Brazilians. This, he declared, was the positive essence of *brasileiridade* that had made Brazil a racial democracy, a society with remarkably little racial tension where ability, not skin colour, governed social mobility. Freyre characterised Brazil as a non-racist society, a characterisation that stood in the face of contemporary reality.

The timeliness of his argument was crucial in that it served the purposes of Getúlio Vargas, a president (1930-1937) and later dictator (1937-1945) intent on creating a power base amongst all levels

Do Valle Silva and Carlos A. Hasenbalg, *Relações Raciais no Brasil Contemporâneo* (Rio De Janeiro: Rio Fundo Editora, 1992.)

¹⁰ Elisa L. Callaux, “Cor e Mobilidade Social no Brasil,” *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* 26 September (1994) : 53-66.

of Brazilian society. As a populist leader, Vargas called for the support of the masses in his push to modernise the country, and Freyre's notion of racial democracy suited this aim in two very important ways.¹¹ First, it helped increase patriotic, nationalistic awareness as Freyre called on all Brazilians to recognise the "grand value" of the country they had built. Second, the notion that Brazil was a racial democracy relieved the state of any moral responsibility for the lamentable situation of the majority of the black population. It was clear, Freyre asserted, that blacks were at the margins of social development, but their abject poverty was a legacy of slavery. Moreover, if blacks did not advance over time in a land of racial harmony, their continuing backwardness would be due to their own lack of ability. The possibility of racial unrest, owing to the extreme poverty and marginalisation of the black population, diminished within Freyre's formula for Brazilian national identity. Racial democracy recognised the valuable contribution made by blacks to the formation of Brazilian society, and it included them in a new definition of *brasileiridade*. It is important to note, however, that the role of blacks as a distinct group in the ongoing development of a new society was not part of Freyre's nor Vargas' concept of national identity.

Yet, in the first decades of the twentieth century, black leaders increasingly viewed blacks as an oppressed and distinct racial group.¹² To counter their growing marginalization in the expanding industrial centre of São Paulo, small groups of black leaders began to form associations and publish newsletters. By 1936, one of these associations, *A Frente Negra*, had fielded candidates in municipal elections and attracted thousands of members throughout the country. As well, the newsletters had evolved into a black-run press. Nonetheless, the remarkable expansion during the thirties of black political and social consciousness ended in 1937 when Vargas seized dictatorial powers and outlawed political activity. Public attention then focused on a nation-wide campaign to incorporate all groups into one progressive Brazilian identity.

Brazilianness vs. Blackness

The eventual submerging of black identity within the larger identity of *brasileiridade* is the central focus of my work, as I seek to understand why blacks embraced *brasileiridade* when a black movement

¹¹ Raymond Williams feels that populism began as a political term that described radical movements linked to labour and the values and interests of the common folk. Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London: Fontana Press, 1976) 238. Such a concept would not apply to Vargas. Therefore, I use the sense of 'populist' suggested by Peter Blanchard, i.e., a charismatic leader from "a discontented sector of the ruling classes who mobilizes urban multi-class alliances, based largely on the less privileged groups, to secure government office." Peter Blanchard, "A Populist Precursor: Guillermo Billinghurst," *Latin American Studies* 9.2 (1973): 251.

¹² Researchers often refer to black leadership during the period as a black elite in the sense that it was made up of men and a few women who were relatively better off and better educated than the rest of their community.

was beginning to gain stature. My interest lies in the reasons for the shift of focus from the development of black solidarity as a means of helping the black community to black support for Vargas as the long-awaited leader who would change Brazilian society for the better. Why did Vargas's call for national unity supersede black leadership's call for racial solidarity? Related issues arise. The first seeks to clarify the relationship that existed between the national acceptance of Freyre's thesis of racial democracy and the abandonment of black perspectives of citizenship as expressed in the black press. The second ponders the reasons for national acceptance of the notion that racial prejudice was a foreign concept and not a Brazilian one. My thesis argues that the development of an image of national identity rooted in cordiality successfully obscured the clear racial prejudices of a hierarchical system that had evolved during slavery, and convinced blacks that assimilation was their only avenue for social mobility.

My research leads to an understanding of the enduring influence of the myth of racial democracy. The roots that fixed this myth in place are encountered in this study of racial awareness, racial democracy, and the national quest for identity in Brazil in the 1930s. My investigation parallels or juxtaposes the black press and the work of Gilberto Freyre, for they present two versions of Brazilian reality that both contradict and complement each other. It is clear that black racial solidarity was beginning to coalesce precisely during those years Freyre was preparing the study of Brazilian history that would subvert it. The juxtaposition of these two sources offers valuable insights into the contrasts between contemporary elite and non-elite views of Brazilian society and, more significantly, into the dualism that characterises Brazilian society.

Although my primary focus is on non-traditional perspectives, I initiate my discussion with a description of the historical and contemporary forces that shaped Freyre's intellectual and social milieu. The opening chapters trace the influences that are reflected in Freyre's work: racial theories and the massive social and economic shifts taking place in Brazilian society at the turn of the twentieth century. An important aspect of this discussion deals with racial terminology as the myriad terms of racial identification in use in Brazil underscore the complexity and ambiguity of Brazilian racial relations. Racial theory is also part of this analysis. Thus armed with understanding of the social and intellectual precedents of upper-class racial attitudes, I fix my attention on Gilberto Freyre. Chapter Three, "The Making of a Cultural Hero," discusses the life of a man whose work exerted incalculable influence on the formation of Brazilian national identity in this century. This accounting of Freyre's motivation and background helps set the stage for Chapters Four and Five which examine the origins and perspectives of the black press.

These final chapters are the focal points of my thesis as they present clear evidence that Freyre's interpretation of Brazilian identity lent itself well to the nationalistic fervour of the Vargas era. This was an era dominated by ideologies such as *integralismo*, a fascist movement that began in the 20s to promote authoritarianism, nationalism, anti-communism, and elite guidance of the masses. The resulting official adoption of racial democracy as a national doctrine of identity overwhelmed the attempts of black leaders to define the distinct nature of black Brazilian identity. The voices of these black leaders are encountered in the writings of the black press. My research focuses most specifically on *A Voz da Raça* (Voice of the Race) published in São Paulo by the *Frente Negra* between 1932 and 1937, as the publication of *Voz* represents a shift in the effort to create political and racial awareness within the black community. In addition, African-American and black Brazilian comment on racial issues in Brazil and the United States enhances understanding of contemporary racial ideology and, as well, offers insight into the assimilation of nationalist discourse. Chapter Five highlights the influence of Arlindo Veiga dos Santos, one of the founders of the *Voz*. He is a useful example of a black leader who preached in editorials and articles against discrimination and prejudice and in favour of assimilation and nationalism.

The concluding chapter looks in a broad sweep at the influences surrounding the assimilative process that defused racial conflict, and at the same time deflected the formation of racial solidarity in the black population. My particular focus is on the Vargas regime as analysis of the reasons for the social and economic marginalization of blacks show close ties between government policies and black acceptance of assimilation. In addition, discussion of the central theme of racial democracy includes a final look at the roles played by Gilberto Freyre and the writers of the black press in the making of Brazilian identity in the 1930s.

An epilogue offers an ongoing evaluation of these influences as it shows how they have increased the ambiguity of Brazilian racial attitudes. In the 1930s a black writer exclaimed, "here, we do not have racial prejudice to combat. We live in perfect harmony with white Brazilians and the foreign element as well. If we had racial prejudice here, I can assure you that our racial problem would have been solved a very long time ago."¹³ Awareness of the ambiguity of his statement leads us to better understand how a society—supposedly tolerant and anti-racist—preserved a status quo that kept blacks in culturally and historically at the same time that it kept them out economically and socially.

¹³ *Voz da Raça* 1.2 March (1933) 1.

IDEOLOGY AND IDENTITY

The dawning of a new era of national thought.

In the late 1800s, the most traditional to the most radical of intellectuals concurred that Brazil was entering a decade of innovative thinking. Brazil seemed to be moving out of the backwardness of a rural slavocracy toward the dynamic progress of a modern republic. As European manners, fashions, and thought were the models of such progress, it is no surprise that scientific theories in vogue in Europe spread throughout Brazilian academic circles. We must not underestimate the power of scientific ideologies during the latter half of the nineteenth century as the term *raça* gained scientific respectability within intellectual circles. Most important, at the turn of the century, racial theories that placed the Nordic male at the top of a hierarchy of evolutionary worth were considered “factual and free of prejudice.”¹⁴ The study of race, together with the revolutionary theory of evolution, created a need for new academic disciplines. Medicine, biology, psychology, anthropology, ethnology, eugenics and sociology were modified by, or in certain cases, actually created to deal with evolutionary paradigms.

Of particular interest to Brazilian men of science were eugenic and social Darwinist theories of social evolution which promoted the scientific management of society as a means of “regenerating” and “purifying” decadent societies.¹⁵ Such ideas seemed to offer practical solutions to forecasted labour shortages after the abolition of slavery as well as the racial and social problem of the “dangerous classes” of slaves and ex-slaves.¹⁶ It is within this scientific context that Brazilian society encouraged the ingress of millions of European immigrants after the end of slavery, and entered a modernisation process that demanded new social definitions.

¹⁴ Elazar Barkin, introduction, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 2.

¹⁵ Dain Borges, “The Recognition of Afro-Brazilian Symbols and Ideas, 1890-1940,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 32:2 (1995) :60.

¹⁶ Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *O Espetáculo das Raças: Cientistas, Instituições e Questão Racial no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1993) 41.

A historic moment

A new phase of nation-building began with the abolition of slavery in 1888 and the industrialization of the south-central part of the country. The First Republic replaced the imperial regime in 1889 and began programs to modernise the economy. The coffee boom fueled the transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy by fostering increased European immigration, foreign investment, and the accumulation of domestic capital for the development of ports, railroads and the introduction of new technology. Earlier, in 1885, the Imperial government, conscious that the abolition of slavery would probably result in a massive labour shortage, had begun a program to import European workers. Italians were the first to arrive en masse—6,500 in 1886; 30,000 in 1887 and 90,000 in 1888.¹⁷ After abolition, the rate accelerated in São Paulo state where local and state governments promoted foreign immigration. Between 1890 and 1899, 762,000 immigrants entered São Paulo which led to a sevenfold increase in the numbers of foreign workers who, by then, made up 23% of the population in the state. By 1920 a total of 830,000 foreigners—one half the number in the entire country—was concentrated in the state.¹⁸ According to Mattoso, the population of the growing city of São Paulo became progressively whiter.¹⁹

This factor worsened already existing prejudice against *negros* and *mulatos* who did not receive the entry-level industrial jobs offered by new industries. They were confined to menial odd jobs or no jobs at all.²⁰ Authorities considered them part of an unruly mass of lower-class poor people and held them responsible for the country's social ills. The poor and non-white, they declared, were "impediments to national order and progress."²¹ Unfavourable stereotyping of *negros*, and especially *mulatos*, became particularly rancorous in the dominant press and literature. It followed, in the perception of concerned elites, that European immigration would be the obvious path to social and economic progress.

¹⁷ Carlos Hasenbalg and Nelson de Valle, Relações Raciais no Brasil (Rio de Janeiro: Rio Fundo, 1992) 101-118.

¹⁸ Hasenbalg, de Valle, Relações Raciais 101-118. Official racial statistics are problematic as the selection of racial categories is highly arbitrary. Nonetheless, they can be used to provide some indications of demographic change. In Brazil in 1835 *brancos* made up 24.4% of the population, *pardos*, 18.2% and *negros* 51.4%. By 1940, *negros* were 14.7%, *pardos* 21.2% and *brancos*, 64.5% according to the official government statistical organ, IBGE in the Anuário Estatístico do Brasil, IBGE (1991) 228.

¹⁹ In 1804, 46.31 % of the population of the city was white. By 1886, that figure had risen to 79% and Mattoso reports that whites made up 90.71% in 1940. This percentage demonstrates the Europeanization of São Paulo in contrast to the northeastern city of Salvador where whites accounted for only 33% of the population. Kátia M. de Queirós Mattoso, Ser Escravo no Brasil, 1550-1888 (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1982) 203.

²⁰ Employers in general preferred European workers as they thought of them as more productive and progressive. As poverty pushed some immigrants into the urban slums occupied by non-whites, they were treated as "no better than blacks." Edward F. Telles, "Industrialização e desigualdade no emprego," Estudos Afro-Asiáticos 26 September (1994) : 25.

²¹ E. Bradford Burns, Third edition, A History of Brazil (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) 260 and Barbara Weinstein, "Not the Republic of their Dreams: Historical Obstacles to Political and Social Democracy in Brazil," Latin American Research Review 29.2 (1994) 262-273.

Although justified as a way of relieving predicted labour shortages, the main purpose of attracting European immigrants to Brazil was to “whiten” the population.

Whitening

Brazilian elites believed that European scientific ideologies could solve Brazil’s social problems.²² They reasoned that miscegenation could be viewed as a positive process that would transform their society. One ideology, in particular, seemed ideal for it could be interpreted in such a way that miscegenation became a scientific method through which “lower races would be absorbed into the higher, thereby eventually eliminating the lower and fixing as national identity the higher.”²³ Eugenics, the science of improving human breeding stock, was the vision of Englishman Francis Galton who in 1833 presented it as a new science capable of correcting a trend towards racial decadence in Great Britain.²⁴ Eugenicists preached that racial purity was the goal of any civilised society, and often pointed out Brazil as the antithesis of scientific management of racial affairs and a singular example of a “mongrelized” society.²⁵

Let anyone who doubts the evils of race mixing — and I include those who through misplaced philanthropy would set aside the barriers that separate the races — come to Brazil. They could not deny the deterioration caused by the amalgamation of the races, (more apparent here than anywhere else in the world) that is quickly diminishing the best qualities of the white, the Indian and the black and replacing them with an indiscriminate hybrid type lacking in physical and mental energy.²⁶

²² Barkin:2. The study of race dealt primarily with evolutionary paradigms. A great number of the resulting tests on humans explained social and racial inequality through the ranking of humankind by race. These studies generally assumed that *racial decadence* resulted from the mixing of *inferior stocks*. Moritz Schwarcz speaks of the discomfort of Brazilian elites when faced with European disapproval of racial mixing, 34-5.

²³ Moritz Schwarcz, 215-217.

²⁴ Galton and subsequent eugenicists predicted a world in which managed scientific reproduction would leave nothing to chance. They felt that modern society was changing too fast for natural selection to keep up with and saw scientific breeding as a means of assisting it. Galton believed that humans could benefit from selective breeding practices used for animals. His cousin, none other than Charles Darwin, commented that Galton’s “fundamental generalizations...partake more of the nature of definitions than of the laws of nature.” Raymond Fancher, *Pioneers of Psychology* 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990) 205.

²⁵ Not all European interpretations of miscegenation were consistently negative. Gobineau, for one, viewed the mixing of “close” races within the borders of Europe as “constructive miscegenation.” While he attributed positive results to European mixing, he still condemned the mixing of Indians, Africans, and Europeans he had witnessed in Latin America. His friend Emperor Dom Pedro II attempted to no avail in personal correspondence to convince Gobineau of the error of his extreme racist arguments. Robert M. Levine, “Elite Perceptions of the *Povo*,” *Modern Brazil: Elites and Masses in Historical Perspective* eds. Michael Coniff and Frank McCann (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1989) 219.

²⁶ Louis Agassiz’s comment after an 1865 visit to Brazil. Agassiz was one of many naturalists fascinated with the natural wonders of Brazil. Anthropologist, Richard Burton, after spending some months in Brazil, referred to “the atrocious mixed breed that now crawls like some disgusting reptile across the fair face of the Brazils.” Moritz Schwarz, 13.

It is not difficult to imagine the dismay this type of characterization caused Brazilian upper classes who viewed Europe as their cultural Mecca and themselves as Europeans in the tropics.²⁷ The Brazilian gentleman in the fine three-piece English suit, strolling down the Rio de Janeiro boulevard designed along Parisian lines, certainly did not think of himself as part of a “totally mulatto population corrupted in blood lines and spirit and above all, frighteningly ugly.”²⁸ Pejorative European evaluations from the 1870s on made Brazilian elites acutely aware that they were losing their claim to European lineage as miscegenation increased the numbers of mixed-race people in the country.²⁹ By 1872, the black and mixed-race group was 55 per cent of the total population.³⁰

This attitude changed, however, when Brazilian intellectuals shifted analysis of their society away from the European viewpoint that miscegenation meant degeneration towards a more defensive posture of national pride. At this point, they began to look to the new sciences for information they could adapt to fit Brazilian reality and thus, challenge European determinist ideas that *tropical* was synonymous with *degeneration* and that miscegenation had inevitably negative consequences.³¹ Intellectuals knew it was their role to lead the way to a new manner of thinking about their country. In 1900 a young valedictorian of the Faculty of Law at Recife declared, “Brazil depends exclusively on us and is in our hands. The future belongs to us.”³² The Recife Faculty of Law had, indeed, led the country in the late nineteenth century introduction of evolutionary models and Social Darwinism. Literature aligned itself with the principles of science and authors declared their characters “darwinianly superior.”³³

By turning science into a principle that could be extended to the most diverse areas of knowledge, the intellectuals of Recife introduced hitherto unknown postures and models. It was now necessary to look at the country in a different manner, “face it

²⁷ British fashion fads were followed by the elite. Richard Graham tells of one gentleman walking along in torrid summer heat in Rio with his woolen trousers rolled up. When asked why he was wearing such hot clothing, he replied, “it might be raining in London.” Richard Graham, Britain and the Onset of Modernization in Brazil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968) 114.

²⁸ According to Gobineau (1816-1882), French consul in Rio de Janeiro for fifteen months. Moritz Schwarz, introduction, 13.

²⁹ José Honório Rodrigues, Brasil e África: Outro Horizonte (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1964) 105.

³⁰ Moritz Schwarz, 13. Skidmore notes the results of the first general census carried out in 1872: whites were 38.4% of the population; blacks, 19.6% and *mestiços*, 42.18%. Thomas Skidmore, “Whitening After Scientific Racism,” Black Into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974) 173-218. Modernist writer, Mario Andrade declared fifty years later that the mixed-blood group was “the racial cross we [elites] have to bear.” Georgina Kaufman, ed., Cartas de Mario de Andrade a Prudente de Moraes, Neto, 1924-1936 (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1985) 120.

³¹ Dain Borges, “‘Puffy, Slothful and Inert’: Degeneration in Brazilian Social Thought, 1880-1940,” Journal of Latin American Studies 25 (1993): 235-256.

³² Moritz Schwarz, 150.

³³ Moritz Schwarz, 151, 2.

in a scientific way.” This was a task that required not only the absorption of foreign interpretations but also their use as a matrix of thought.³⁴

Recife intellectual Silvio Romero was instrumental in the adaptation of European scientific thought to national problems.³⁵ Using terminology from Spencer and Darwin—previously unknown in Brazil—Romero set out to prove that miscegenation rather than a monstrous fearful state was, in fact, a possible source of a new national homogeneity that would have positive results. Romero argued that the key to understanding national problems was the study of “ethnographic criteria” which led to race as the common denominator of all knowledge. Everything was connected to the factor of race and it was in this area that the future of the nation lay. His position over time lost some of its radical fervour, but the message remained the same: “Brazil’s people are *mestiços* and it is of little use discussing whether or not this is good or bad; the fact is that this is the way it is!”³⁶

His comment implies that a theory of democratic miscegenation did not exist before the end of the century. Racial prejudice and elite domination were simply taken for granted at this time. Blacks did not exist as citizens nor as objects of study or literature until after Abolition.³⁷ Without question, whites were firmly in control and *negros* and *mestiços* knew their ascribed places in the social structure.³⁸ Only at the end of the century, would the idea of a melting pot begin to appear in literature when, to some authors, the category of *mulato* became “a semantic structure that expressed the social reality of their historic moment and one that corresponded on a symbolic level with a search for identity.”³⁹ Still, racial theorization of the period made it clear that the *mulato* was to be an artifact of history, for Brazil was on its way to becoming a nation of whites. In his 1921 novel *Canaã*, Graça Aranha (a student at the Recife Law school at the time) had the main character declare his support for this idea.

³⁴ Moritz Schwarcz, 152-3.

³⁵ It is important to note that Gilberto Freyre admired Romero enormously.

³⁶ To Romero, “survival of the fittest” meant that whites would dominate eventually. He presumed blacks would disappear through miscegenation. Moritz Schwarcz, 154. To Silvio Rabello, Romero’s position was an “Aryanism of convenience” that emphasised the “positive” outcome of hybridization rather than the negative ones that so concerned Europeans. Moritz Schwarcz, 155.

³⁷ During slavery, field slaves were, in certain cases, lumped in with animal goods and farm equipment on bills of sale.

³⁸ Although slaves and ex-slaves formed approximately one half of the population, *mestiços* were able to secure some social mobility only through the patronage system controlled by elites. Carlos Hasenbalg and Suellen Huntington, “Brazilian Racial Democracy: Reality or Myth?” *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* ed. Jorge Domínguez (New York: Garland Publishing Co. 1994) 130.

³⁹ Romero, Euclides da Cunha, and Nina Rodrigues are examples mentioned by Renato Ortiz, *Cultura Brasileira e Identidade Nacional* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1985) 31.

Speaking to you with the utmost frankness, the civilization of this land is dependent on the immigration of Europeans, but it is necessary that each one of us feels the need to govern and direct....Then, in the distant future, the era of *mulatos* will pass so that an era of new-whites may return....and these will accept and recognise the patrimony of their mixed-blood predecessors who will have built something, because nothing happens on the face of the earth without meaning or use.⁴⁰

The creation of this “new-white” Brazil was to occur through the judicious application of eugenic measures to improve society. The importation of whites from Europe would, elites believed, absolve them from responsibility for economic and social structures that were at the root of social problems, for Brazil’s backwardness could now be blamed on hereditary factors. New white blood would whiten Brazilian society and Brazil would progress. Adapting the positivist motto imprinted on the Brazilian flag, eugenicists declared, “*Eugenia é ordem e progresso.*”⁴¹ Yes, they agreed with foreigners, Brazil was sick, but its degeneration was curable.⁴² Whitening—positive miscegenation—was going to create a new society. Edgar Roquete Pinto, anthropologist and president of the First Brazilian Congress of Eugenics held in 1929, devised the following graph to demonstrate that with the influx of European immigrants whitening would be a rapid process that would bleach the face of Brazil.

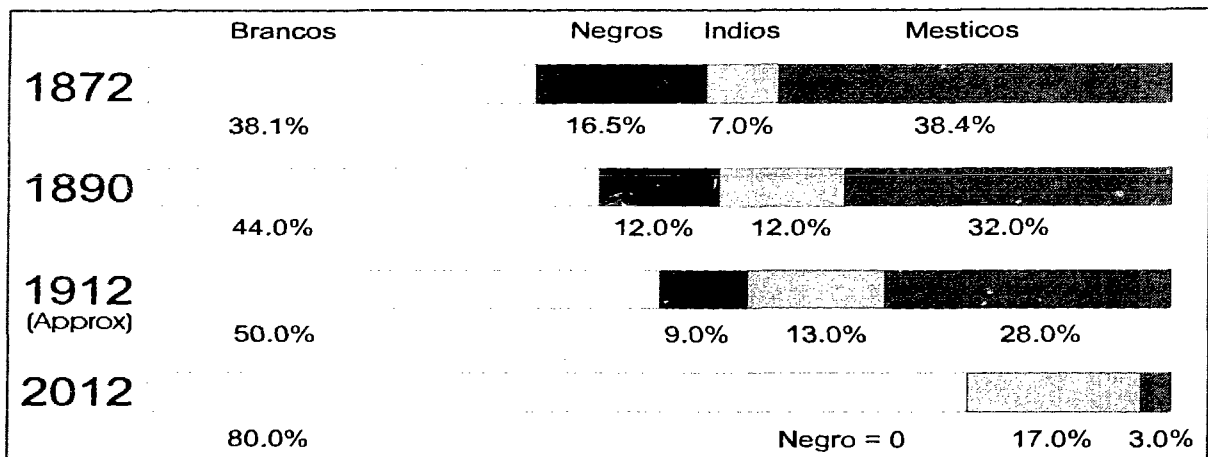


Figure 1: Roquete Pinto’s prediction of the racial make up of Brazilian populations based on official statistics 1872-1890⁴³

⁴⁰ Moritz Schwarcz, 152.

⁴¹ “Eugenics is order and progress.” Nancy Leys Stepan, *The Hour Of Eugenics: Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991) 89-95.

⁴² In contrast to sterilization and segregation of *inferior* elements in the population carried out in the United States and Germany, Brazilian eugenicists adapted eugenic thought to the Brazilian reality of a largely mixed-race background and sought to *purify the race* through programs of public hygiene, vaccinations and sanitation. Stepan, 153-170. Many of these programs, however, pushed the poor out of urban centres to the hillsides and gulleys when their tenement homes were demolished to make way for wide new avenues and new upper-class residential areas. Francisco Alencar, Lúcia Carpi and Marcus Vinícius Ribeiro, *História Da Sociedade Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Ao Livro Técnico, 1983) 198.

⁴³ Moritz Schwarcz, 97.

A New Era

The panacea for Brazilian ills was a mix of science and social ideology that would be applied to a socially hierarchical and racially stratified society undergoing enormous change. At the turn of the century, Brazil was an essentially Catholic, rural, racially mixed and illiterate society. Within a short period, there were abrupt shifts and breaks in the social order. Between 1888 and 1930, serious challenges to its traditional social and political structures arose: the abolition of legal slavery (1888), the fall of the Monarchy (1889), the overthrow of the First Republic (1930) and the revolutionary installation of the populist regime of Getúlio Vargas (1930.) Compounded by the effects of rapidly increasing industrialization, immigration and urbanization, these power shifts called for considerable adaptation on the part of all members of society. Though all were affected by the changes, not all, however, would be permitted to participate in the process of change for the Empire and subsequent governments excluded non-elites from political participation or, at very best, allowed them tightly controlled access.⁴⁴

Notwithstanding the imperial control exercised during the monarchy, the abolitionist movement had managed to get its platform through to end a slavery system already weakened by massive slave desertions and changing economics. This movement collapsed shortly after the fall of the Monarchy. Albeit short-lived, the power wielded by abolitionists, served as a warning to the elites of the First Republic who constitutionally structured their own government so as to prevent popular movements from posing a threat to their interests. The French observer, Pierre Denis, at the time noted the oligarchic nature of the system stating that it all hinged on “large landed proprietors” whose obedient “candidates govern and administer Brazil.”⁴⁵ Accordingly, the government was not representative of the population as a whole. Popular participation was limited to alternative arenas.

Restricted political participation and growing discontent are time-honoured recipes for social unrest. It is no surprise then that uprisings of all types of groups from disgruntled monarchists and anarchists to dissatisfied workers and military *tenentes* kept Brazil in turmoil throughout the first decades of the century. The country lurched from crisis to crisis in its search for ways to solve (or subterfuges to avoid solving) deeply troubling constitutional, economic, social, philosophical and structural

⁴⁴ One indication of the degree of illiteracy can be found in voting statistics. Bradford Burns affirms that fewer than five percent of the population met literacy and other requirements to become voters between 1894 and 1906 and only 2.4% of the population voted in presidential elections. Bradford Burns, 340. By 1920, 70% of the population still lived in rural areas and modernisation programs primarily attended the needs of upper-class urban groups. Alencar, Carpio and Ribeiro, 214.

⁴⁵ The Republican constitution of 1891 called for a decentralized federal structure that gave considerable freedom to states. Electoral access was restricted to levels that were lower than in 1881. Pierre Denis, Brazil (London:1911) 183. ctd by George Reid Andrews, “Black Protest in São Paulo” in Domiguez, 154.

questions. In 1930, the fourth military revolt since 1922 successfully overthrew the First Republic with the support of agrarian elites of the south and northeast who felt they had been isolated from political power by their São Paulo and Minas Gerais counterparts. Their leader, Getúlio Vargas, managed to consolidate his power and topple the First Republic after a decade of trying. Vargas initiated a process of what Darcy Ribeiro calls “authoritarian-progressive-nationalism” in a country beset by doubt.⁴⁶

Oliveira Vianna had argued since the early twenties for this type of political direction. A nationalist, authoritarian statist system, he thought, would counteract liberalism which he saw as hopelessly inadequate for the realities of Brazil. To avoid chaos as the country modernized, he proposed that corporatism be adopted as a form of government. Thus, “the state, authority, the public good, national progress, elite direction and class harmony” should matter more than individuals and would, in Vianna’s opinion, solve the problems of a stratified and unstable society by providing strong institutions.⁴⁷ On the eve of the 1930 revolution, Vianna wrote that a “powerful centre of firmness, of stability, of coordination for our political life...needs to be invented, needs to be discovered.”⁴⁸ Vargas promised to provide such a centre, and Vianna was to help develop the guiding philosophy of Vargas’ *Estado Novo* (1937-1945.)

Vianna is a key figure in the elaboration of twentieth century Brazilian political discourse. Significantly, he embodies the racial contradictions of the nation. A *mulato*, he is well-known for his strong belief in Aryanism, and his idea of state direction included state-directed whitening programs such as the stimulation of immigration. Vianna perceived the majority of the population to be “a mass of idle, useless *mestiços*.”⁴⁹ An influential scholar, he held high positions in the Vargas administration throughout the twenties and thirties, and his strict opposition to liberalism and unwavering support of national statism reinforced Vargas’ authoritarian policies. The corporatist ideal of Oliveira Vianna merged with the populism of Getúlio Vargas in an absolute reign that lasted fifteen years.⁵⁰

In 1930 Vargas took power after a decade of industrial development had produced a new middle class, urban working class unions, and political parties that ran the spectrum from left to right. The elitist attitudes—“a social question is a police question”—of the First Republic had alienated enormous

⁴⁶ Darcy Ribeiro paints a picture of almost unbearable social change during this period. Ribeiro, note 669, n. p.

⁴⁷ Jeffrey D. Needell, “History, Race, and State in the Thought of Oliveira Vianna,” *Hispanic-American Historical Review* 75.1 February (1995): 1-30.

⁴⁸ Needell, 28.

⁴⁹ Ribeiro, note 401, n. p.

⁵⁰ Needell, 2-3.

numbers of these new groups who demanded participation in the formation of a new society.⁵¹ Vargas appealed to these groups and, until today, older people of humble origins call him *o pai do povo*—the father of the people. Alongside reformist labour legislation, a defining characteristic of the Vargas regime was its drive to create a homogeneous consciousness of nationhood as a basis of social and political life. This objective would be achieved by the mobilization of national campaigns to generate a patriotic sense of national unity. The leveling of ethnic disparities was an issue of great concern and, by the late thirties, the notion that cultural and racial fusion was the solution to Brazil's racial and social makeup had become a *de facto* part of Vargas' concept of nation-state.⁵²

Like his predecessors in power, Vargas did not deal with the causes of deep racial-class cleavages in Brazilian society. Moreover, the authoritarian bent of the Vargas regime served to drive racial prejudice underground as the nation “dreamed of the disappearance of the black through miscegenation.”⁵³ Yet, earlier in the 1930s his national cultural policies had organised and directed a new cultural identity based on the recognition of black cultural and religious symbols as an integral part of Brazilianness. This new concept of Brazilian culture embraced music, dance, and religious activities that had formerly been considered low class, i.e. black, therefore socially unacceptable. Cultural inclusion became especially apparent after 1937 when there was a shift in the official portrayal of the *povo*. The previously negative view of lazy, indolent, and degenerate racial hybrids became one of new Brazilians united in an ideology of culture, work, and modernization.⁵⁴

Vargas made nation-wide transmission of this ideology a major project using the new mass medium of radio to reach all regions. Interpretations of national culture widened to include cultural activity associated with black expression which now came under the category of national folklore or mass culture. Such incorporation of *cultura negra* was occurring as black political organisations were disappearing with the prohibition of political opposition by the *Estado Novo*. At this point, Gilberto Freyre was offered the position of Minister of Education and Culture during his first interview with Vargas in 1937—in spite of his left-wing connections and previous opposition to Vargas.⁵⁵ Although

⁵¹ See years 1900 to 1930 in Ribeiro's chronological study of Brazilian history.

⁵² Randall Johnson, “Regarding the Philanthropic Ogre: Cultural Policy in Brazil, 1930-1945/1964-1990,” *Constructing Culture and Power in Latin America* ed. Daniel H. Levine (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993) 319-356.

⁵³ Later in 1945, in spite of having instituted a National Day of the Race, Vargas would emphasize “the necessity of preserving and returning the ethnic characteristics of the population to the convenient characteristics of its European ascendancy.” João Carlos Rodrigues, *O Negro Brasileiro e o Cinema* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Globo, 1988) 57.

⁵⁴ Johnson 321.

⁵⁵ Freyre's reputation as a person to be watched for left-wing social beliefs is evident in the annotations found in a copy of *Estudos Brasileiros* which presented the proceedings of the first Afro-Brazilian Congress held in Recife in 1934. This intriguing resource has a cover sheet indicating its passage by Military Censorship authorities in 1941. Gilberto Freyre's name

Freyre did not accept the position, several of his subsequent works were published by the Ministry of Education.⁸⁶ Such official recognition institutionalised Freyre's view of Brazilian society that the new Brazilians are not *negros*, nor *mulatos*, nor *brancos*, they are simply *brasileiros*. Yet, as we see in the following chapter, racial terms proliferate in Brazil. We can use them as evidence of the complex ambiguity of Brazilian racial attitudes in order to better understand the world in which both Freyre and black writers lived.

is heavily underlined on the first page and certain of his contributions that relate to social class are underlined throughout the book. Notes in the margins make it clear that Freyre and his friends were suspected of communist sympathies. Any criticism of the social status-quo merited especially heavy underlining. A simple reference to a dialectical judgment received the remark, "dialectical materialism of Marx" and one contributor had "communist" written beside his name. Estudos Brasileiros Rio de Janeiro: Editora Ariel, 1955, *passim*.

⁸⁶ Darcy Ribeiro, prologue, Casa Grande e Senzala (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, c.1973) 106.

RACE

Most Brazilians believe the proliferation of racial terms indicates a flexible and tolerant view of race. Current Brazilian social criticism admits, however, that the existence of scores, if not hundreds, of skin colour categories more likely reflects an intense underlying concern with race in Brazil.⁵⁷ In view of the importance of these contradictory aspects of the Brazilian racial question, a brief overview of race, racial theory, and the revision of racial democracy lends itself well to the furthering of research into Gilberto Freyre and the black press in later chapters. My analysis rests on interpretation of the interaction between the two as they represent elite and non-elite interests and values in a society that is economically and socially “divided” along racial lines. The ambiguity of this “dividing line” creates a Brazilian racial puzzle of, for example, a single biological family that may classify its members in differing racial terms. The view that such racial ambiguity is a product of history and a mechanism of social control is ideally suited to scrutinizing the rhetoric of Freyre’s racial democracy to better contrast it with other writers’ versions of the reality of Brazilians, both white and black.

Miscegenation and Racial Terminology

Miscegenation in a land where non-whites outnumbered whites may be a cause of the proliferation of racial categories. Racial mixing between indigenous peoples and Europeans began shortly after the arrival of Europeans in the New World in the sixteenth century. The importation of millions of enslaved African labourers added a third element to the process of “population-making.” At first, it was easy for Europeans to maintain their dominant status by force over blacks and indigenous groups. Absolute domination became less facile as intermediate groups emerged with increasing miscegenation. The existing “social-racial hierarchy” attempted to classify this hybridized population. Not surprisingly, mixed-race individuals did not fit the accepted social or racial definitions of European, African or Indian; they were neither white nor necessarily subjugated individuals. The practice evolved of describing such intermediate people in terms that indicated their ancestry, their physical appearance,

⁵⁷ In 1994, Cristina Rodriguez estimated 53 words for skin colour variations were in use only within the black community and attributes their use to the belief that being black in Brazil is synonymous with being stupid and poor. Isabel Vincent, “Success-seeking women are dyeing to be blonde,” *The Globe and Mail* 7 Feb. 1994, A1. The actual number of terms is not clear, however, a preoccupation with skin colour is generally obvious. A 1980 IBGE study estimates 130 terms. Thales de Azevedo, in *Democracia Racial*, estimates there are 300 (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 1976) 68.

and their social standing. As can be imagined, with the continuation of miscegenation down through the centuries, the number of necessary combinations grew exponentially. Elaborate systems of classification grew to unmanageable proportions throughout the Americas.⁵⁸

In the early years of colonization in Brazil, *preto* meant slave and *branco*, free man. But this simple dichotomy did not reflect reality when society became more complex. How would one classify a person, for example, who by appearance and ancestry was *preto* but by education, culture, language, dress, wealth and other social and cultural characteristics was *branco*? Could a black doctor be classified in the same terms as a black plantation slave? An extremely complicated linguistic structure of “naming” racial-social origins emerged to deal with such conundrums. With the abolition of slavery, many terms for intermediate types began to disappear from polite usage by the end of the nineteenth century, although they continued in the vernacular.⁵⁹ As evidenced in the following table, since the turn of the century three criteria—ancestry, physical appearance, and socio-cultural status—have replaced supposed ancestry in references to racial identity.

⁵⁸ Charles Wagley, “On the Concept of Social Race in the Americas,” in Dominguez, 13.

⁵⁹ For clarification of categories after abolition, see Clóvis Moura who dedicates a chapter to the question of miscegenation and identity. “População, Miscigenação, Identidade Étnica e Raça,” *Dialética Radical do Brasil Negro* (São Paulo: Editora Anita 1994) 123-171.

figure 2 - System of values within the miscegenation process⁶⁰

Portuguese	English	Inferred value
<i>Branco</i>	White defined more by social status than actual skin colour-see <i>pardo</i> ⁶¹	Ideal type=SUPERIOR
<i>Mulato</i>	Mulatto, Mestizo, mixed blood	Intermediate type both socially and ethnically. ⁶² Cross between <i>Negro</i> and <i>Branco</i> . Social value: inferior to <i>Branco</i> .
<i>Mameluco, caboclo</i>	Mixed blood	Intermediary type both socially and ethnically. Cross between <i>Índio</i> and <i>Branco</i> . Symbolically valued as the “noble savage” during part of nineteenth century. Currently makes up mass of poor peasantry.
<i>Cafuso</i>	Mixed blood	Cross between <i>Negro</i> and <i>Índio</i> . Intermediate type socially and ethnically equal to <i>Negro</i> . Socially inferior for this reason.
<i>Pardo</i>	Colour between black and white, also <i>mulato</i> but meaning changes with social context. Colour category used in official census report together with <i>Branco</i> , <i>Negro</i> and <i>Outros</i> .	Ethnically indeterminate type categorized by social status: can be: <i>Mulato</i> (in certain areas can be called <i>cabra</i> [goat] if poor) <i>Moreno escuro</i> -Dark Brunette <i>Moreno claro</i> -Light Brunette <i>Moreno jambo</i> -Brunette with rosy-coloured skin (the colour of the Jambo fruit) It is within this group that the Brazilian expression “Money whitens” has most meaning. ⁶³
<i>Índio</i>	Indian Indigenous person Aboriginal	Static folklorized ethnic group in media; under government tutelage until very recently.
<i>Negro</i>	Afro-Brazilian, Black	The negation of ideal ethnic, social and aesthetic type chosen by dominant power, past and present= the OTHER or INFERIOR

⁶⁰ Moura, *Dialética Radical* 1-7.

⁶¹ It is implicit in Brazil that *branco* is more of a reference to wealth and education than it is to actual white skin colour. Nonetheless, Thales de Azevedo notes that, at any time in Brazilian history, the presence of very dark black phenotypes amongst elite classes has been exceptional and has only occurred within the system of patronage. Azevedo, *Democracia Racial* 30.

⁶² I use ethnic, as Moura does, to denote a population group with shared characteristics.

⁶³ Another expression, “rich black man is white and poor white man is black,” is further indication of the fluidity of racial definitions.

Racial Democracy: Theory and Revision

Analytical frameworks for the specific study of Brazilian racial issues are not lacking as American scholars, in particular, have often turned their attention to Brazil for insight into their own racial situation. Comparisons made before the 1950s were usually skewed in the favour of Brazil, “the racial paradise.” Well into the seventies, Brazilianists in general accepted Gilberto Freyre’s notion that Brazilian slavery had been relatively less severe than in other slave-holding nations and that race relations were more cordial in Brazil. Carl Deglar argued that a “mulatto escape hatch” enabled *negros* to achieve social mobility through miscegenation and Thomas Skidmore felt Brazilian racial flexibility reflected its multi-racial status in contrast to a bi-polar racial system in the U.S.⁶⁴ More recently, Howard Winant’s “racial formation perspective” reflects shifts in the analysis of race in the United States in that he suggests that race cannot be analyzed as an isolated factor nor racial attitudes traced to any one cause. Freyre’s racial democracy falls neatly into Winant’s definition of racial theory, i.e., at a given time a racial theory provides a society with an explanation of social inequality. Furthermore, a racial theory is a set of categories that serves to classify groups in racial terms. In Winant’s view, race is a social construct that changes incessantly, “a malleable complex of social meanings constantly in flux.”⁶⁵

Brazilian anthropologist Lívio Sansone interprets the malleability of racial meaning as a sign of the importance of context and comparison. In Brazil, he says, the differences between blacks and whites and what it is that distinguishes them is recreated on a day-to-day basis. This is due to the fact that blacks and whites exist as categories only in relation to each other and also to the fact that blacks usually do not see themselves as an ethnic minority. For this reason, black identity is frequently more flexible and eclectic than the ethnic identities of recognised groups. According to Sansone, “there is a mutable, almost intangible character to ‘white’ and ‘black’ in Brazilian society.”⁶⁶ Clóvis Moura, on the other hand, argues that this fluidity is a sign of discrimination by dominant society that has led to fragmentation and dilution of racial identity in Brazil. A means of escaping discrimination is to assume an ambiguous and symbolic identity, one that is as close as possible to the ideal proposed by the dominant group. In Brazil, this has meant symbolic identification with white phenotypes and

⁶⁴ Carl Deglar, Neither Black Nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1971). Thomas Skidmore, Black Into White. Skidmore later reversed his assessment to admit the possibility of polarised race relations in Brazil. “Bi-racial U.S.A. vs. Multi-racial Brazil: Is the Contrast Still Valid?” Journal of Latin American Studies 25 (1993): 373-386.

⁶⁵ Howard Winant, “Rethinking Race in Brazil,” Journal of Latin American Studies 24 (1993): 173-192. Also see Winant and M. Omi, Racial Formation in The United States (New York: Routledge and Paul, 1985.)

⁶⁶ Lívio Sansone, “Pai Preto, Filho Negro,” Cadernos Afro-Asiáticos 25 December (1993): 73-98.

behavior.⁶⁷ And miscegenation, as preached by the ideology of racial democracy, would enable blacks to *purify* themselves. Once whitened, there would be no barriers to their progress.⁶⁸

Racial ideology, according to historian Emília Viotti da Costa, is part of the social myths that are an integral part of the reality of daily life. Both social scientists and historians operate at the level of social mythology and 'willy-nilly,' she says, "they themselves help to destroy and create myths. In the process, the 'truth' of one generation very often becomes the myth of the next."⁶⁹ The work of Gilberto Freyre furnished the "truth" the first generations of twentieth century Brazil were seeking. His interpretations of the formation of the Brazilian family used the past selectively to reaffirm the intrinsic value of Brazil in the international community. He was not alone in celebrating the notion that Brazilians were unique for having created the only true racial democracy in the world. Freyre's assumption that the differences between Brazilian and American race relations could be traced to a milder form of slavery in Brazil became the basis of an international image of Brazilian racial harmony.⁷⁰ The writing of other Brazilians in this period fortified this image as they emphasized the warmth, tolerance, and cordiality of the Brazilian people. Freyre's notion of benign slavery and historian Sergio Buarque de Holanda's of the cordial Brazilian complemented each other in the national mythology of racial and cultural incorporation in the 1930s.⁷¹

The myth survived into the 70s and 80s despite its debunking by respected scholars from the 1950s on. Why we might ask, has the myth been so durable? Two answers have been suggested: that it somehow expressed the reality of people like Freyre; and that it is an image of the real world manufactured by ruling classes to disguise forms of oppression.⁷² In fact, Freyre's depiction of a three-tiered racial hierarchy may well have reflected turn-of-the-century Brazilian society, to judge by George Reid Andrews' study of blacks in São Paulo over a period of one hundred years. Andrews looked at employment records as well as black press writings to trace changes in patterns of racial inequality. He argues that current black-white dichotomies are the result of the modernization and economics of a

⁶⁷ Clóvis Moura, *Dialética Radical* 156-7.

⁶⁸ I once overheard an elderly woman comment that her dark-skinned daughter was "cleaning her uterus" by marrying a lighter-skinned man.

⁶⁹ Emília Viotti da Costa, *The Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories* (Chicago: The Dorsey Press, 1985) 235.

⁷⁰ Viotti da Costa, "George Reid Andrews, *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo, Brazil, 1888-1988*. Introduction, Two Comments and a Rejoinder by the Author," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 29.2 (1992) : 141-158. Stanley Elkins, Frank Tannenbaum, and Percy Alvin Martins are American scholars who legitimized this view of benevolent slavery and tolerant Brazilian race relations in the United States. Discussion by African-American writers and scholars of the period tended to characterize Brazil as a "racial paradise" and "a model for racist America." This perspective is elaborated in Chapter Four.

⁷¹ David Brookshaw, *Race and Color in Brazilian Literature* (London: The Scarecrow Press, 1986) 125.

⁷² Viotti da Costa, *Brazilian Empire* 237.

constantly evolving social structure. In his opinion, the ongoing argument that race is subordinate to class may be a vestige of a period in Brazilian history when it was indeed the case.⁷³

Michael Mitchell foreshadows Andrew's argument by suggesting that the approach of Freyre's generation was based on the idea that social relations were made more flexible by allowing individuals to assume the identity of the dominant group.⁷⁴ The assumption was that a person of mixed background would prefer to be labeled white and the benevolent gesture of granting the privilege of white status demonstrated lack of prejudice.⁷⁵ As Freyre was writing his book based on this assumption, social relations were changing with the push to modernize the country. Moreover, the flood of European immigrants into São Paulo and the South was bringing an entirely new population group into the racial equation. Freyre's work seems a reaction to these changes as he defended a way of life that was crumbling in the semi-feudal society of the agricultural Northeast of Brazil, a region fast losing power to the industrializing Southeast. As well, he was speaking for a generation of Brazilians, only thirty years removed from slavery, whose roles as slave owners had formed their attitudes to society. Thus, the reality of Freyre's thesis is that of an agrarian economy about to lose its centuries-old dominance in Brazilian national affairs.

The second view of Freyre's work is as an inverted image constructed for social control. In 1950 the United Nations began an investigation into Brazilian race relations expecting to find a blueprint for racial harmony the rest of the world could learn from after the horrors of World War II. However, much to their surprise, UNESCO researchers found glaring discrepancies between the image and reality.⁷⁶ In a country they assumed to be the model of race relations, they found undeniable inequality between blacks and whites through analyzing figures from the 1950 census.⁷⁷ Florestan Fernandes, Thales de Azevedo, Marvin Harris, Roger Bastide and Charles Wagley all of whom participated in the study documented the persistence into the 60s of the ideology of *whitening* supposedly

⁷³ George Reid Andrews, Appendix B, Blacks and Whites in São Paulo, Brazil, 1888-1988 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991) 253.

⁷⁴ Michael Mitchell emphasizes the importance of race consciousness within a changing society, "Racial Consciousness and the Political Attitudes and Behaviour of Blacks in São Paulo, Brazil." Diss. Department of Political Science, Indiana University, 1977: 35-44.

⁷⁵ Abdias do Nascimento, Brazil, Mixture or Massacre (Dover, Massachusetts: The Majority Press, 1989) 79.

⁷⁶ For a partial list of works commissioned by UNESCO, I acknowledge the information provided by Michael Mitchell, "Racial Consciousness and the Political Attitudes and Behaviour of Blacks in São Paulo, Brazil," Diss. Indiana University, 1977:56. See Florestan Fernandes and Roger Bastide, Branços e Negros em São Paulo (São Paulo, Anhembi, 1955); L.A. Costa, O Negro no Rio de Janeiro (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1952); Rene Ribeiro, Religião e Relações Raciais (Rio de Janeiro: Ministério de Educação e Cultura, Serviço de Documentação, 1956); Charles Wagley, ed. Race and Class in Rural Brazil (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) and Thales de Azevedo, As Elites de Cór (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1955).

⁷⁷ Viotti da Costa, Brazilian Empire 236.

debunked by Freyre in the 1930s.⁷⁸ Florestan Fernandes concluded that the “prejudice of having no prejudice” was an attempt by elites, past and present, to avoid dealing with inequality and, thus, continue thinking that structural changes were not necessary.⁷⁹

Brazilian racial democracy is part of a complicated economic and sociocultural situation, a situation which leads the white man to seek subterfuges and ways of concealing his inability to endow Brazilian society with real social equality at all levels of human relations.⁸⁰

Freyre’s concept of racial democracy led him to argue that blacks would disappear into the melting pot of Brazilian identity and this, at the time, seemed a positive reversal of the overt racism of previous generations. Still, notwithstanding his fame as the author who overturned the scientific racist theory of *whitening* in Brazil, Freyre neither questioned the domination nor the superiority of white elites. Blacks themselves embraced his theory that they were inferior. With these contradictions in mind, it is clearly not an easy task to undertake an investigation of this complex member of an elite class who felt predestined to “explain” his country. In the next chapter, however, his diary entries offer interesting insight into the inner feelings of Freyre, and through his thoughts the reader can trace the evolution of his theory of Brazilian race relations. Subsequent analysis of *Casa Grande e Senzala* leads to interesting contrasts among Freyre’s contradictory research results, his character, his experiences as a boy growing up in an elite family whose history was intimately linked with slavery, and finally his life as a foreign student abroad. A brief examination of his student relationship with Franz Boas and his theory of cultural relativity rounds out the discussion of Freyre’s difficulty to create a coherent argument for his theory of racial democracy. The intent of Chapter Three, in short, is to explain how Freyre and *Casa Grande e Senzala* gained the status of cultural icons of Brazilian history.

⁷⁸ Winant, “Rethinking Race” 174-5.

⁷⁹ Skidmore, *Black into White* 217.

⁸⁰ Florestan Fernandes, Preface, *The Negro in Brazilian Society* (New York: Columbus University Press, 1965)

THE MAKING OF A CULTURAL HERO

Gilberto Freyre has been a cultural symbol to three successive generations of Brazilians. In the 30s and 40s, he was the world-renowned intellectual, the author of the definitive work on the formation of Brazilian social and cultural identity, and the father of the racial democracy thesis. During the military regime that lasted from 1964 to 1986, anti-government critics saw him as the vain, self-promoting, repetitive writer who was the reactionary puppet of the military regime. They further called him the father of the myth of racial democracy. Since his death in 1987, Gilberto Freyre has become the mirror of a generation, a psychological puzzle, and a key to understanding social mechanisms of the past and present.⁸¹ Who then was this man who wrote about the Brazilian family and slavery. Why was he seemingly fixated on the sexual habits of white Brazilian males? Why did he make constant comparisons throughout his work between the racial situation in the United States and Brazil? Why did he present such an idyllic picture of the past? Why did he not seem aware of the deep racial cleavages that existed in Brazilian society?

The questions could go on endlessly for Freyre was, without doubt, a complex product of his upbringing, generation, and world. "It is the child that reveals the man" he himself declared long ago. He said he wanted to tell the history of the Brazilian child from colonial times on to be able to tell the history of Brazil. He felt that such a history should be *sociological, psychological, anthropological*, and not *chronological* as, only thus, could he "arrive at an idea concerning the Brazilian's personality."⁸² By using Freyre's formula, albeit in chronological fashion, the reader will begin to see the forces that shaped

⁸¹ Needell believes that Freyre's search was a personal attempt to resolve his own ambiguities: Jeffrey D. Needell, "Identity, Race, Gender and Modernity in the Origin of Gilberto Freyre's *Oeuvre*" *The American Historical Review* 100. 1 (February 1995) : 50-77. Brazilian authors are Freyre's most severe critics: Gilberto de Macedo asks why Freyre assumes Aryan roots are dominant in a society largely made up of African slaves for most of its history as a nation. *Casa Grande e Senzala: Obra Didática* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Editora Cátedra under arrangement with Ministry of Education and Culture, 1979); Maria Alice de Aguiar Medeiros seeks to understand how a book that preached social peace and racial harmony in an authoritarian, unequal society could have such tremendous international percussion and end up defining the elements of Brazilian identity. Medeiros views *Casa Grande e Senzala* as a vehicle for elitist views. *O Elogio Da Dominação: Relendo Casa Grande e Senzala* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Achiamé, 1984) Luiz Costa Lima explores the ways Freyre distorted or misunderstood the concepts of Franz Boas. "A Versão Solar do Patriarcalismo: Casa Grande e Senzala," *A Aguarrás do Tempo: Estudos Sobre a Narrativa* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Rocco, 1989).

⁸² Gilberto Freyre quote from 1921 diary. Jeffrey Needell, "Identity, Race, Gender," 56.

Gilberto Freyre and influenced his work. Italics refer to information adapted from Darcy Ribeiro's essay on Freyre's diary and are followed by my analysis in brackets.⁸³

Freyre: the child and the man

1900 - *Gilberto Freyre was born in Recife, Pernambuco in the Northeast of Brazil, son of Alfredo Freyre and Francisca de Mello Freyre, both descendants of sugar plantation and slave-owning families. (Throughout Casa Grande e Senzala, he refers to branches of his family as he traces his own roots in the slave system.)*

1907 - *He began receiving tutoring at home with private teachers, two of whom taught him their native languages: French and English. (Freyre was an anglophile at an early age. Such adoration of Europe was a common attribute of Brazilian elites of the turn of the century.)*

1915 - *At age 15 he had his first sexual experience with a mulatinha. (He later referred to her as a morena with tiny feet⁸⁴ and wrote in his diary that the experience had changed him forever. Mulatas have been stereotyped as sexual temptresses of white men in Brazil and the work of Freyre emphasizes this image.⁸⁵)*

1916 - *He was already beginning to tackle books like *Pilgrim's Progress* by Bunyan and the works of Tolstoy, Renan and Eça de Queiroz. He felt that Tolstoy in particular had shown him that brotherly Christianity linked all men regardless of race or class and that those who were more educated would bring light to the common people. (Freyre never wavered from his belief in elite guidance of society.)*

1917 - *He completed secondary school at the Gilreath American School in Recife whereupon he declared himself a Baptist who would spread his "half-socialist, half-religious" ideas by becoming a missionary. (His American education in Brazil and in the United States influenced him enormously. It fueled his anglophilia, but later added to his confused feelings of identity when, as a young university student, he tried to understand the status of Brazil as a country of mestiços.)*

1918 - *During his first trip to the United States, he visited New York where he was most impressed by the "bourgeois complacent nature" of American Protestantism. Freyre wrote that he had to forget his Tolstoy and re-read Herbert Spencer to be able to comprehend this "ultra-bourgeois civilization." He also began to study English literature. While he was definitely an anglophile, he expressed his pride in the riches of his two mother tongues (Spanish and Portuguese) -- especially with regard to their mystic qualities. He stated that he felt sorry for the scientists and modernists to whom this type of mystical literature was archaic and not worthy of the "modernity of scientific formation." (Here, we begin to see Freyre's fascination with language. His later ability to*

⁸³ All excerpts in italics are adapted from Freyre's diary. Darcy Ribeiro, Introduction, *Casa Grande e Senzala* (Caracas, Venezuela: Biblioteca Ayacucho, c.1973) 96-107.

⁸⁴ Needell:69. It is curious to note that Freyre later changed his description of the *mulatinha* of his diary to *morena*, a racial euphemism to denote darker skin, in his diaries published in 1975. *Moreno* is currently the preferred term in use for dark skin in Brazil. It may refer to persons of African descent, but also may mean "tanned" or "brunette." In the eighties, Freyre called for recognition of what he called *morenidade* as the essence of *brasileiridade*.

⁸⁵ Many Brazilian writers have thus characterized the *mulata*. Jorge Amado is a well-known example but others such as Nina Ribeiro thought the *mulata* "an abnormal type of super-excited sexuality" and José Veríssimo said she was "the *dissolver* of our moral and physical virility." Freyre argued that this corruption was not due to innate immorality of blacks but to the sexual aggression of their masters. Nevertheless, he agreed that *negras* and *mulatas* were seductive in a highly charged sexual environment he attributed to the hot climate. Freyre, *Casa Grande* 527, 446.

meld science, literature, fiction and fancy into his story of a nation may well represent the true literary value of his work.)

1919 - He returned to the United States to attend Baylor, a small university in Waco, Texas. His stay had a profound effect on him as he visited a black ghetto on the outskirts of Waco for the first time. "This is much more horrible than I had imagined...a shame on this Philistine civilization." Later that year he traveled to the South and, upon asking where the awful smell was coming from, received the answer in a simple straightforward manner: "it's a negro the boys just burnt." (His widow, seventy years later, recalled his intense horror at the brutality of U.S. racism.⁸⁶ His experience in the U.S. was, without doubt, the comparative factor that most upheld his belief that Brazilian race relations were fraternal, and significant racial prejudice did not exist in Brazil.)

1920 - He began his studies at Columbia University as a scholarship student in Political Science and was a contemporary of Margaret Mead, M. Herskovits and Ruth Benedict. His studies included Anthropology (Boas), Political Economy (Seligman), Sociology (Giddings), Political Science (Munro), Social History (Hayes), Philosophy (Dewey), and Law (Basset-Moore). He threw himself with a passion into British and North-American literature and often commented in his diaries that he was meeting the great literary figures of the time. He felt that Columbia was the greatest American university and was happy to have the opportunity to study there. Freyre did extremely well in his studies. (This type of background provided Freyre with academic clout and confidence. *Casa Grande e Senzala* was a massive first work published as the definitive history of the Brazilian family. Its truth was accepted by the reading public in part because Freyre's academic credentials were beyond reproach.)

1922 - He was beginning to feel out of place in such an overwhelmingly "imperialistic Anglo culture" and became much more aware that his own origins were not quite up to snuff due to the mixed-race reputation of Brazil. The Hispanic world of literature now drew his attention; he said that he could feel proud of and comfortable with the values he presently encountered in his study.

After receiving his Master's degree in 1922 and having it published the same year, he left the U.S. for Europe on a study-tour.⁸⁷ In Paris he met some Brazilian modern artists, traveled through Germany and ended up in London where he stayed a time at Oxford attending lectures. (This period is one of intense questioning and self-doubt. During his travels in Europe he is known to have had homosexual liaisons.⁸⁸ His doubts about his own identity, both sexual and national, perhaps led him to look to Brazil's past for personal direction.)

1923 - After a visit to Portugal, he returned to Recife. He had left Brazil a boy of 18 and now declared he saw it with different eyes, those of an adult. He explained that adult in English imparted a sense of sophisticated. He felt that this new vision had given him the perspective he needed to see his fellow Brazilians by using a combination of profound empathy and distance. (The five years abroad brought Freyre in direct contact with European attitudes of superiority, race hatred, and condemnation of racial mixing. In his Master's thesis he provided positive images of the Brazilian past and later defined *brasilidade* in terms of a harmonious racial history.)

⁸⁶ Needell, "Identity" 58

⁸⁷ Gilberto Freyre, "Social Life in Brazil in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 5 19 Nov. (1922): 597-628. Submitted in 1922 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for his Master's of Arts degree in the Department of Political Science, Columbia University.

⁸⁸ Interview with Freyre by Ricardo Noblat for Playboy magazine, 5 March, 1980, Needell, "Identity" 58.

1923- For the next couple of years he immersed himself in his culture and began the many contacts and friendships that would characterise his life. He also experienced the difficulties of re-adaptation but wasted no time fitting back into the "patriarchal life of [his] tropical corner of the world." He led a discreetly bohemian existence -- smoking *maconha*, drinking and eating with the locals and, as Ribeiro reports, had *uma amante negríssima*. He confessed to friends that he had a desire to write a book on his own childhood and, within this work, describe the childhoods of all the diverse regional types of Brazilians over four centuries. (During this period, Freyre was instrumental in the gathering together of young writers and artists who valued provincial traditions. They became the founders of Northeastern regionalismo which, like modernismo in São Paulo, grew in reaction to official high culture which both literary movements saw as alien to Brazilian reality.⁸⁹)

In this period he wrote in his diary: "I am endogamous --what a wonderful sociological word!--and I almost always feel attracted by women who, when white, look like my mother, cousins, sisters; exogamous I am in my attraction, which is enormous, for women of colour." (His attraction to non-white women may explain the primary focus of his book: that Portuguese and Brazilian slave masters' attraction to dark-skinned women was the reason for miscegenation.⁹⁰)

1925-1930 - These years were spent developing a career both as an intellectual and as a member of the Pernambuco government cabinet. By 1929, he was juggling three jobs: his government position and his posts as director of the principal daily newspaper in Recife and Professor of Sociology in the Normal School of Pernambuco. (All the while he insisted that he did not want to run for political office; his prime objective was to be a writer.)

1930 - In spite of his desire to remain outside political conspiracies, he was dragged into the turmoil surrounding Vargas' Revolution of 1930 and fled Brazil. He ended up in exile in Lisbon where he began to gather the material he needed to write *Casa Grande e Senzala*.

To continue the project, he accepted a position as visiting professor at Stanford University in the United States and began to travel extensively in the Deep South making observations on its similarities to the Northeast of Brazil. (His contact with the evil of racial segregation affected him for the rest of his life causing him to evaluate racial awareness as the first step to racial hatred. Brazilians had to avoid a repetition of the American experience at all costs.)

1931 - He returned to Brazil and, in 1932, finished his book.

1933 - He sent the manuscript off to the publishers and celebrated the occasion by giving an enormous party at his family property. All the guests came in costumes typical of the good old days of the Casa Grande and the Senzala. (The theme was, of course, repeated forty years later in the restaurant in Recife.)

1933 - The publication of his book provoked enormous repercussions. Freyre, hitherto unknown, was praised by famous writers for his originality, profundity, erudition and elegance. Not everyone was as enthused with his work. A group of Pernambucanos, indignant with his "obscene language, negrophile stance and offenses directed at the Church and Jesuits," threatened to burn the book in public. (His treatment of slavery provided social blinkers for

⁸⁹ Needell, "Identity" 59.

⁹⁰ According to Needell, Freyre's emphasis on heterosexual behaviour in *Casa Grande e Senzala* showed his rejection of homosexuality after his brief fling with it in Europe. However, personal sources who were part of the Freyre social circle in Recife in the 1950s drew my attention to gossip that questioned Freyre's sexual orientation many years later.

his class, as we see that even those who criticised his work did not question the truth of it, but rather its unorthodox style.

1934 - Freyre organised the first Congress of Afro-Brazilian Studies. (From 1934 to 1938 important congresses were held in Recife, Bahia and Minas Gerais which gathered writers and scientists who were seeking channels of communication. The first annual was published in 1934 and its editor, Edgar Roquete Pinto, repeatedly praised Freyre for his positive study of the black contribution to Brazilian historical formation. In fact, many of the articles in the annual were similar to Freyre's work as they analysed the history of blacks in diverse parts of Brazil as well as the scientific aspect of their longevity, psychology, and blood types.⁹¹ After the publication of several books celebrating the varied racial elements of the Brazilian character, it became intellectually acceptable to develop the foundations of a distinctive Africanology.⁹² Regardless of the stressing of black values, however, the articles were written by whites and used for the benefit of whites. By emphasizing what was different and exotic about the *negro*, the writers treated Afro-Brazilian culture as a source of aesthetic enjoyment.)⁹³

1935 - Minister of Education, Gustavo Capenema installed Freyre as professor extraordinário of Sociology in the Faculty of Law at the University of Recife. The same year Freyre inaugurated a position of Social Anthropology and Social Investigation at the Federal University in Rio de Janeiro, at the time capital of the country — a position he supposed to be the very first of its type in Brazil. (Freyre's position as leading intellectual is firmly entrenched during this period.)

1935- His second major book *Sobrados e Mocambos* (Mansions and Shanties) appeared. (Most of Freyre's books have dichotomous titles.)

1937 - In an interview with the Argentine newspaper *La Opinión*, Freyre described the events surrounding the coup carried out by Vargas: "In 1937 I supported the candidacy of José Américo de Almeida, a Northeastern writer who opposed Vargas, even though Vargas had originally given him his support. Soon thereafter, the takeover occurred and, in the confusion, we did away with the conventionality of putting some to the left and some to the right.(...) To my amazement, the first audience the dictator Vargas granted me was to propose that I take on the Ministry of Education and Culture." (Freyre did not accept, but the invitation indicates official approval of his work.)

⁹¹ Vol.1, *Estudos Afro-brasileiros* I Congresso Afro-Brasileiro, Rio de Janeiro, 1935; Vol.2, *Novos estudos afro-brasileiros* Rio de Janeiro, II Congresso Afro-Brasileiro, 1937 and Edison Carneiro and Aydano do Couto Ferraz, eds., *O Negro no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1940). For information on the III Congresso Afro-Brasileiro held in 1982 see Roberto Motta, coordinator, *Os afro-brasileiros* (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Editora Massangana, 1985).

⁹² Freyre was presumably aware of the Harlem Renaissance during his student days at Columbia University in New York and was certainly conscious that his own nationality was made up of cultural traits from Africa. So too were many writers attending the Congress. They had spent time in Europe and became interested in the Africanness of their own culture when African styles of art, music and dance became the rage in Paris during the twenties. These writers of the modernist literary movement of the twenties sought to discover Brazilian originality and sever Brazil's umbilical cord to Europe. An intimate look at the thinking of modernists is provided in Kaufman's *Cartas de Mario de Andrade a Prudente de Moraes Neto 1924 - 1936*.

⁹³ Domínguez, 94.

The following years are replete with honours and Freyre enjoyed national and international prestige as the foremost interpreter of Brazilian life.⁹⁴ His was a long life of public acclaim which began with the success that followed the publication of *Casa Grande e Senzala* in 1933.

Freyre's "Old Social Order"

In studying my grandmother's days, [earlier referred to as "the good old days"] I have approached them neither to praise nor to blame — only to taste the joy of understanding the old social order.

Gilberto Freyre determined to explain "the old social order" in his Master's essay at Columbia University. The theme of Brazilian patriarchy, the underpinning of that order, became the focus of most of his writing during his lifetime. His first and most important book, *Casa Grande e Senzala*, introduced Freyre's idea that Brazil had experienced a benign form of slavery, as masters formed social and sexual bonds with slaves which resulted in harmonious race relations in a racially-mixed society.⁹⁵ Yet, the contradictions are clear.

First, he rarely mentioned the eighty-percent of blacks who were field hands and he devoted but one paragraph on the last page of his six hundred and forty-nine page book to house slaves not happy with their lot.

The life of the *negros*, the slaves of the white *zoiôs* and *zaiás* (masters and mistresses) was not always happy. There were those who killed themselves eating earth, hanging themselves, poisoning themselves with the herbs and potions of witchdoctors. There were those who from so much longing became idiots—the *banzo*—longing for Africa. They did not die but just withered away. And having lost the will to live a normal life, they gave themselves to excesses and abuse of aguardente, marijuana and masturbation.

With no further comment on their lives, Freyre ends the book by listing twenty two diseases afflicting slaves—an abrupt and curious ending.⁹⁶

Second, there are discrepancies between his thesis of benign slavery and the type of vocabulary he used to describe the relationships of masters and domestic slaves. Still, although the book was controversial at first, its message of national and racial pride did not take long to spread throughout

⁹⁴ In 1947 Jorge Amado convinced the Cultural Commission of the House of Deputies to nominate Freyre for the Nobel prize for Literature. In 1971, Gilberto Freyre became Sir Gilberto Freyre when Queen Elizabeth II made him a Knight of the British Empire.

⁹⁵ Sixty years after initial publication, "Casa Grande" is in its 25th. edition and has been translated into many languages.

⁹⁶ Freyre, *Casa Grande e Senzala* 649.

Brazilian society.⁹⁷ Jorge Amado, a life-long admirer of Freyre, called *Casa Grande e Senzala* “a revolution...in our literature, in our cultural life, in our national growth.”⁹⁸

Casa Grande e Senzala

The Big House, completed by the slave-quarters, represents an entire economic, social and political system: of production (*latifundiário* monoculture); of work (slavery); of transport (ox-cart, sedan-chair, horse); of religion (Catholicism of the family with the sacristan subordinate to the *pater familias*...); of sexual life and of family (polygamous patriarchy); ...of politics (*compadrismo* [system of favours]). It was the fort, the bank, the cemetery, the inn, the school, the alms-house.⁹⁹

This social system was the basis of Freyre’s study of Brazilian history whose enormous success was partially due to its aura of scientific expertise in the discussion of racial and cultural issues. It was, he said, a mix of history, sociology, anthropology, autobiography and psychoanalysis—a search for his own identity.¹⁰⁰ Freyre’s work was inspirational. His recreation of a world of masters and slaves was uniquely different. In an era of strong nativist sentiment, the young author’s use of language was unorthodox in a refreshingly Brazilian way. His inclusion of recipes, songs, customs and games that were part of Brazil’s recent slave-owning past presumably brought warm recollections from the depths of collective elite memory. Freyre spoke directly to his readers assuming that they shared his memories of being suckled by *mães pretas*, raised by black *babás*, served by black *criadas*, obeyed by black playmates and seduced by young black girls.¹⁰¹ It is not surprising that these images struck a chord amongst upper classes who felt nostalgic yearning for an era when firmly established limitations to non-elite social mobility were in full effect. Freyre’s discourse of racial harmony based on patriarchal authoritarianism reflected a traditional view of society. The Big House, said Freyre, was where the “Brazilian character of social continuity” was best expressed. The role of the elite was as “master” of the masses.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ The appeal of Freyre’s thesis was not surprising as it supplied academic backing to a positive evaluation of national identity that had its beginnings in the twenties with Modernism, the literary movement that expressed appreciation of Brazil and its multiracial background. Kaufman.

⁹⁸ Aguiar Medeiros, 15.

⁹⁹ In the 13th ed. of *Casa Grande e Senzala* (Rio de Janeiro, José Olympio, 1966) Freyre provides the prefaces of all previous editions. Preface to the 1st ed., xvi.

¹⁰⁰ Jan Fiola, “Race Relations in Brazil: A Reassessment of the ‘Racial Democracy’ Thesis” *Program in Latin American Studies Occasional Paper Series*, no. 24 (Amherst University of Massachusetts, 1990) 6.

¹⁰¹ Freyre stated that Brazilian slave-owning families attributed their own vices to the “pernicious influences” of the *negra* or *mulata* slaves who corrupted white boys at an early age with “lessons of libidinous behaviour.” He himself attributed such corruption to the pernicious effects of slavery. Freyre, *Casa Grande* 513-527.

¹⁰² Freyre, preface to 1st ed., *Casa Grande e Senzala*, xvi.

Freyre referred to his work on the history of these two elements in Brazilian society as the “equilibrium of antagonisms.” He felt that blacks and whites as slaves and masters living together in the *Casa Grande* had played roles that created a social balance that neutralized racial differences in Brazil. Costa Lima, highly critical of Freyre, states that a more appropriate term would be “antagonisms in equilibrium” to better reflect the reality of a society that used social mechanisms of patronage and cordiality to neutralize not racial differences, but demands for racial equality.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, Freyre sought to avoid antagonism between whites and non-whites at all costs. His early contact with the violence of American race relations influenced him to produce a version of Brazilian history that defused potential racial conflict. This he achieved, on the one hand, by frequent allusion to the brutality of *Anglo* slavery and segregation and, on the other, by presenting from a patriarchal perspective a nostalgic picture of a *Casa Grande* bustling with people of all colours.

It is telling, however, that the rural world outside the Big House is sparsely described and Freyre usually presented reassuring stereotypical images of happy workers who sang as they toiled. In effect, he virtually ignored the harsh reality of the eighty per cent of slaves who were field hands, but justified his omission by saying that they had to be distinguished from house slaves who had the benefits of moral and religious assistance.¹⁰⁴ This he accomplished by focusing on those slaves whom he characterized as “friends” of white masters and their families. With this said, he fixed his attention on the domestic scene, as it was here that his theory of racial harmony took root. It was Freyre’s firm belief that the slaves who shared the daily intimacies of whites’ home life learned to value white behavioral models. Most important of all, their descendants would move closer to a white phenotype through the process of miscegenation.¹⁰⁵

Freyre, the Intellectual

Freyre’s defense of miscegenation seemed a rebuttal to the racist theories of men like Oliveira Vianna who blamed *mulatos*, a “dishonour on the national memory,” for the backward state of the country. In contrast, Freyre attributed the miserable conditions of most blacks to “a wretched historical

¹⁰³ Luis Costa Lima, Prologue, Ricardo Benzaquem de Araújo, *Casa Grande e Senzala e a Obra de Gilberto Freyre nos Anos 30* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora 34, 1994) 9.

¹⁰⁴ Freyre, *Casa Grande* 630.

¹⁰⁵ Freyre, Chapter Five, “O escravo negro na vida sexual da família brasileira,” *Casa Grande* 575-650. Freyre used the sexual relationship between masters and female slaves as the measuring stick of Brazilian authoritarianism and submission, characteristics he felt were integral parts of national identity. He declared that this type of personality development arose from the sadism of masters and the masochism of slaves. Needell elaborates: “For Freyre sexual activity and racial domination are metaphors for one another.” Freyre looked at this sexual dominance/rape as the source of the intimacy shared between masters and slaves that formed racial democracy. Needell, “Identity,” 71.

apprenticeship.”¹⁰⁶ Freyre and his group battled with his adversary Vianna who was largely responsible for the scientific certification of whitening theories already present in Brazilian society since Abolition.¹⁰⁷ Deviating from Vianna’s idea that miscegenation was a shameful, but necessary evil, Freyre proposed that miscegenation was a positive form of eugenic reconstruction. He believed that, through miscegenation, the black element furnished a strong eugenic ability to flourish in the tropics that the white component lacked. His understanding of eugenic theory led him to presume that the *mulato* was a hybrid national type at a transitional level of eugenic development. The success of his proposal led to the rehabilitation of the image of *mulatos*

It is here, however, we see his close identification with the ideals of *whitening* as his view of the *mulato* was of an *almost white* person.¹⁰⁸ In other words, the absorption of the *negro* will occur in any racial cross with the stronger white stock. It is clear that, however much Freyre seemed to be proposing radically new ways of evaluating different sectors of the population, he never wavered from his assumption that whites or the *whitened* would quite naturally dominate. The new anthropological perspective he espoused shifted the blame for the lack of progress of blacks from racially determined bases to nutritional and cultural factors, but did not remove the blame from blacks. Blacks are inferior, Freyre argued against race supremacists, but their inferiority stems from the social fact of slavery, and not from the fact of belonging to the black race.¹⁰⁹ The duality of Freyre’s statements that blacks were valuable additions to the melting pot, and that they would disappear as weaker elements of racial mixing is a particularly confusing aspect of his writing in *Casa Grande*. Freyre himself was never unsure of his argument, as he firmly believed that he had learned to distinguish racial and culture differences from the study of cultural relativity with Franz Boas at Columbia University.

The study of Anthropology under the orientation of Professor Boas first revealed to me the true value of the *negro* and the *mulato*—when racial lines are separated from the effects of the environment and cultural experience. I learned to see as fundamental the differences between race and culture; to discriminate between the effects of purely genetic relations and social influences, of

¹⁰⁶ Needell, “History, Race, and State in the Thought of Oliveira Vianna,” 30. Freyre was a major critic of Vianna.

¹⁰⁷ Criticism of Vianna mounted in the thirties. His work was attributed to “outdated, late nineteenth-century, post-positivist anthropology and sociology.” Needell, “History, Race, and the State,” 13. Freyre’s work provided new “ideological clothes” to the blacks, Indians, Portuguese and mulattos of Brazil says Aguiar Medeiros, 24.

¹⁰⁸ Singer Cactano Velloso has described Brazil as a land where *quase brancos mandam em quase pretos*—“whitish people rule blackish people.”

¹⁰⁹ To disagree with Vianna’s notion that Brazilian blacks were inferior, Freyre argued that Hausa and Fula (Malês or Muslim) natives were almost European in hair and features. Thus Brazil imported a “better stock” of African slaves who were “false *negros* of a stock superior to that of the authentic *negro*.” Freyre, *Casa Grande* 426. Also see preface, 1st ed., xxxii for comment on eugenics.

cultural heritage and the environment. Within this criterion of differentiation between race and culture lies the plan of this writing [*Casa Grande e Senzala*].¹¹⁰

Boas' theory of cultural relativity emphasizes the value of culture in the explanation of differences between social groups. He argued that in a multi-racial society each different ethnic group has its own form of behaviour, distinct one from the other as a result of cultural not racial specifications. Several students of Boas are known for their ground-breaking treatments of the groups they set out to study and Freyre was no exception. However, as he developed his mammoth analysis of Brazilian slave society, he did not maintain a purely culturalist line but juxtaposed racialist comment on the eugenic value of certain groups.

The sexual intercourse of whites of the best stock – including ecclesiastics who were, without doubt, the most select and eugenic element in Brazilian formation – with black slaves and *mulatas* was formidable. It resulted in enormous numbers of illegitimate children, *mulatinhos* often raised with legitimate offspring within the liberal patriarchy of the *casa grande*.¹¹¹

Freyre's inference that the children of priests' unions with non-white women were biologically superior is akin to his analysis of the superiority of race mixture between the "best elements" of the slave-quarters with the "best elements" of the Big House. Herein lies the ambiguity of Freyre's argument that culture rather than race is the factor behind the problems of Brazilian development. Although he championed a cultural vision of history, Freyre was seemingly unable to distance himself from evolutionary theories like eugenics that assigned biological levels of "quality" to human groups.

Freyre thought he had absorbed his beliefs from Boas whom he credited with providing the inspiration and guidance he needed to understand his own society. He apparently did not, however, comprehend fully the rupture in contemporary racial thought advocated by his professor. It is true that Freyre echoed Boas' position on miscegenation,¹¹² and Freyre is commonly held to be the anthropologist who brought cultural historicism to Brazil. Nevertheless, Freyre distorted Boasian interpretations of race, culture, and ethnicity. For example, Boas discounted race as a factor of human difference. "There is such great variety of responses of groups of the same race but culturally diverse that it seems probable that whatever biological differences may exist are of less importance," he wrote.

¹¹⁰ Freyre, preface to 1st ed., *Casa Grande*, xxxi.

¹¹¹ Freyre, *Casa Grande e Senzala* 618-9.

¹¹² Franz Boas wrote in 1921 that "lessening of contrast between the Negro and the white will bring about lessening of class consciousness. The negro problem in America will not disappear until negro blood has been so much diluted that it will no longer be recognised." *Race and Democratic Society* (New York: Biblio and Tannen, 1969) 80. Boas believed that race was not a biological category, a radical concept in an era that generally accepted the idea of genetic racial inferiority and condemned race mixing

¹¹³ Boas further rejected claims that human culture was uni-causally linked to geography.¹¹⁴ Freyre, on the other hand, looked to both race and geography for cultural and racial explanations of human development. The Portuguese people, he explained, were formed by their close contact to Africa and domination by Moors for many centuries. “Predisposed by its geographical situation...Portugal is anthropologically and culturally an enormous variety of antagonisms, some in equilibrium, some in conflict.” This, he said, had produced “a flexible social whole which is characteristically Portuguese.”¹¹⁵ This image of the Portuguese is the foundation of Freyre’s theme of racial harmony which he considered the logical result of the Portuguese colonization in Brazil. Nonetheless, if he were, as he said, following Boasian culturalism, he would not have put race at the forefront of his argument. Rather, he would have subordinated it to a secondary position in his work as Boas did. Yet Freyre’s tendency was to continue using race as the central issue from which he then analyzed cultural aspects. Thus, contrary to what we see in Boas, Freyre drew his conclusions on culture from his analysis of racial and environmental factors.

Freyre, Father of National Identity

Thus far, we see that Freyre did his own balancing act of antagonisms. His story of the formation of Brazilian society left out any significant reference to the majority of the population who were black field labourers, but emphasised the contributions of blacks to national character. He praised blacks for their strength in tropical climes, but called them weaker elements in inter-racial unions. He recognised their cultural inferiority, but rejected assumptions of racial inferiority. He criticized scientific racism, but upheld eugenics. It is logical to conclude that his inconsistencies reflected the ideological confusion of Brazilian elites in general, and that the sentimental historicity of his book was an expression of order and continuity in troubled times.¹¹⁶

Casa Grande e Senzala was indeed persuasive. It evoked strong feelings of nostalgia and pride as it legitimised the Brazilian way of life in a number of important ways. First, in a political sense it

¹¹³ Franz Boas ctd. in Luis Costa Lima, *Aguarrás* 196.

¹¹⁴ Costa Lima, *Aguarrás* 199.

¹¹⁵ Freyre, *Casa Grande e Senzala* 281-2.

¹¹⁶ Freyre was not the only writer to provide Brazilians with a new ideology of national identity during the thirties. Like Freyre, other intellectuals combined new literary styles with social science perspectives to re-discover their country. Race, political culture and an agrarian heritage were amongst the previously suppressed or ignored topics that reshaped discussions about the nation. These discussions shifted Brazilian elite attention away from European racial ideology and focused it on the need to develop Brazil’s own unique identity as a progressive, mixed-race South American nation. Sérgio Buarque de Holanda’s *Raízes do Brasil* (1936); Caio Prado Jr.’s *Evolução Política do Brasil* (1933) and *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo: Colônia* (1942). As ctd. In Dain Borges, “Review Essay: Brazilian Social Thought of the 1930s,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 31:12, (1994) 138.

bolstered the waning power of certain groups in the Northeast who resented the increasing dominance of the industrialising urban southeast. Freyre's writings "express the agrarian oligarchies' prospects of participating in the 'new order' without any need to concede structural change."¹¹⁷ Second, Freyre's idea that racial amalgamation would produce a vital new Brazilian race suited Vargas' vision of a strong unified nation. Third and most important, the acquisition of an ideological element of Brazilian identity that crystallized race relations favoured the dominant class. Thus, Freyre's work provided a national solution to national questions.¹¹⁸

The thesis of racial democracy celebrates the intertwining of the African, Portuguese, and indigenous roots of Brazilian society. Its definition of Brazilianness does not recognize separate racial identity, and the dominant press in Brazil reflected this concern until the late 1980s. In contrast, a long list of at least eighty-five publications directed to the black community between 1892 and 1985 with such titles as, for example, "The Voice of the Race (1932-1935), "The Black Tribune" (1935-1939), and "The Voice of Negritude" (1952-1953) calls into question Freyre's assumption that separate racial consciousness did not exist in Brazil. The following chapters look at the development of black racial identity from the post-abolition period through to the late 1930s. The focal chapters of this thesis, they present the way blacks defined themselves in a world in which they were increasingly ignored or defined by others as a social problem.

¹¹⁷ Elide Rugai Bastos, "Gilberto Freyre e o mito da cultura brasileira," *Humanidades* 4:15 (1987) 30.

¹¹⁸ Carol Smith suggests that national ideology must be created if the state is to pursue developmental policies and that popular belief in a unified nation allows the state to substitute hegemonic for coercive forms of rule. Persuasion is the key to power. Carol A. Smith, "Failed Nationalist Movements in the Nineteenth Century. Guatemala: a Parable for the Third World," in Richard G. Fox, ed. *Nationalist Ideologies and the Production of National Cultures* American Ethnological Society, Monograph series, no.2, (1989) 232.

THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

The Black Press in Brazil

Moura classifies self-defined racial or ethnic identity as an individual or group consciousness of ancestral origins that determines affirmation of cultural and social values. He argues that the “conscious agent” seeks to form groups that share these values, especially when dominant society considers them inferior.¹¹⁹ Accordingly, in the early years of the twentieth century, small groups of concerned blacks gathered to discuss the worsening situation of non-whites in Brazil and decided to speak out for their community against discrimination. The record of their determination to lead the black community to its rightful place in Brazilian society is in the black press microfilm on file in the Biblioteca Nacional in Rio de Janeiro. The press provided an arena for discussion of black social affairs, the ambitions of the black community, and the worsening of racial discrimination. In essence, the microfilm contains the public language of an oppressed majority challenging, after 1930, a dominant minority. James Scott questions the meaning behind the public transcript of subordinate groups. And as we have seen, Freyre presented a version of Brazilian identity to which subordinate discourse, i.e., the black press, had to accommodate itself. Scott affirms that the *official story*, i.e. the public transcript of dominant groups, more often than not, is simply the representation of how the dominant group in a society would like to have things appear.¹²⁰ In chapter five—the prime focus of my research—my objective is to demonstrate that analysis of the writings of Arlindo Veiga dos Santos, co-founder of the *Frente Negra* and its newspaper, *A Voz da Raça*, provides an opportunity to view Scott’s analysis in another light. As an elite leader of an impoverished mass, Veiga dos Santos acted as an interpreter of dominant values in the black community. Thus, his argument for assimilation is evidence of the power of dominant discourse within the “public transcript” of the black press.

Much earlier, a potential alternative to the dominant discourse began in a humble fashion in the black community. Between 1892 and 1937 the black press served as the primary vehicle for the

¹¹⁹ Moura does not distinguish between ethnic and racial groups, but classifies both as groups that have shared cultural and/or physical characteristics. Clóvis Moura, *Sociologia do Negro Brasileiro* (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1988) 204-5.

¹²⁰ James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (London: Yale University Press, 1990).

development of racial solidarity amongst blacks. Its writers used small newspapers to spread their message that racial pride was an essential part of the fight to achieve economic and social equality. Thirty-two new titles appeared from 1892 to 1935, but not a single new black newspaper emerged while Vargas was consolidating his vision of national unification (1936 to 1944.) Evidence of the extent of internal political influence on the development of the black press in this period is clear as 15 new titles appeared between 1945 and 1961.¹²¹ This chapter follows the growth of the black press in Brazil and seeks to explain why it lost the momentum it was gaining and virtually ceased to exist after 1937 when official definitions of national identity began to incorporate the black population. Of most importance to a study of the black press are the writings of those blacks who viewed themselves as leaders of their community. I focus on the writers of the São Paulo black press as they lived and worked in the growing centre of power in Brazil. They were a very small group of literate or, in some cases, semi-literate black men who struggled to produce newsletters that circulated precariously in a generally illiterate black community.

The Meaning of Language

There are problematic elements that merit attention in an examination of the Black Press. One of these lies in the area of discourse analysis. Is an “outsider” from the last decade of the twentieth century capable of understanding symbolic meaning that may be hidden behind early twentieth century transcripts rooted in group experience not shared by the researcher? James Scott indicates there are serious consequences to non-analytical reading of the writings of subordinate groups in a society.

The theatrical imperatives that normally prevail in situations of domination produce a transcript in close conformity with how the dominant group would wish to have things appear. The result is that the public transcript is - barring a crisis - systematically skewed in the direction of the libretto, the discourse represented by the dominant. In ideological terms the public transcript will, typically, by its accommodationist tone, provide convincing evidence for the hegemony of dominant discourse. It is precisely in this public domain where the effects of power relations are most manifest, and any analysis based exclusively on the public transcript is likely to conclude that subordinate groups endorse the terms of their subordination and are willing, even enthusiastic, partners in that subordination.¹²²

Scott's cautions are valid. However, it is important for my purposes to understand that there is a connection between evidence that the Black Press of the twenties seemed willing to publicly endorse

¹²¹ Of considerable interest are the figures referring to 1962-1972 when 0 titles appeared but there was a surprising resurgence of the black press shortly after the most repressive period of the military regime between 1973-1985 when 34 titles came out. Ubirajara Damasceno de Motta, “Jornegro: Um Projeto da Comunicação Afro-Brasileiro,” *Revista de Cultura Vozes* 82:1 Jan/Jun (1988): 51.

¹²² Scott, introduction 4.

miscegenation and the consolidation of racial democracy as the cornerstone of Brazilian national identity.

There are other considerations that must be taken into account in a study of unequal power relations of any type. William Roseberry says that “words, images, symbols, forms, organizations, institutions and movements used by subordinate populations to talk about, understand, confront, accommodate themselves to, or resist their domination are shaped by the process of domination itself.” Roseberry contends that this shared framework of expression is significant as its power of hegemony is stronger than that of any ideology.¹²³ This certainly seems to be the case in Brazil, for as the nationalist discourse of the Vargas regime spread through the lower levels of Brazilian society, it became a tool that blacks used to protest against European immigration. Little could they know that as they proclaimed their status as Brazilians in contrast to the *foreignness* of immigrants, they were participating in the fragmentation of the black movement.

Other relevant avenues of investigation lie in dominant/subaltern patterns of behaviour as there were significant changes in the ways the black press dealt with the dominant social structure during the period under study. Politicization increased after the emergence of the *Frente Negra*, and public discourse became less deferential and more contentious. Demands for educational opportunities and access to employment grew more insistent. At the same time, however, there arose considerable conflict amongst factions in the black community with regard to “excessive” participation by the *Frente* in the quasi-fascist Integralist group backing Vargas. Thus, black leadership had to constantly adapt, not only to the outward demands of a rapidly changing society, but also to those of segments of their own community. As a black elite, they were caught in the middle. Still their response in the black press to the ideology of racial democracy is evidence of their desire to deal with change and participate in the formation of a progressive Brazilian identity.

From the mulato to the black press

O Exemplo, the earliest known newspaper written and published by blacks, appeared in 1892. It was published in Porto Alegre in response to the overt racism blacks experienced in the far south of the country, a region largely populated by recent immigrants from Europe.¹²⁴ Although abolitionists used the “voice of the slave” to protest slavery a decade earlier, there is little evidence that either slaves or

¹²³ William Roseberry, “Hegemony and the Language of Contention,” Gilbert M Joseph and Daniel Nugent, eds. *Everyday Forms of State Formation* (Durham: Duke University, 1994) 361.

¹²⁴ *O Exemplo*, (Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul: Biblioteca Municipal, 1892).

libertos participated in their publications.¹²⁵ In addition, the ‘mulatto press’ of the nineteenth century falls outside a clear definition of a ‘black press’ — published by blacks to promote black interests — as there are conflicting interpretations of its purposes. Flory, for example, categorizes it as whites writing under the guise of black identity, while Moura argues that its writers were *mulatos* who were affirming their distinct status as non-slaves and demanding social mobility. Nevertheless, both agree that the ‘mulatto press’ did not address the problems of blacks in general.¹²⁶

Yet, for my purposes, it is important to digress for a moment to discuss the ‘mulatto press’ as it marks the emergence of the notion of mixed-race Brazilian identity, the separation of *mulatos* from *negros*, and is a possible indication of the appropriation of *mulato* imagery to further elite interests in Brazil. Taking as my argument Flory’s position that such titles as *O Homem de Cor* (The Man of Colour), *O Brasileiro Pardo* (The Brown Brazilian), *O Crioulo* (The Creole), or *O Mulato* were used to proclaim Brazilianness rather than *négritude*, I concentrate on the nativistic intent of the ‘mulatto press’ and its relation to abolitionist thought.

The ‘mulatto press’ first appeared in 1831 as an offshoot of pamphlets published earlier in the twenties to demand that native-born citizens be given preference over foreign-born.¹²⁷ Decrying the discriminatory attitudes of Portuguese immigrants, the Portuguese emperor who resided in Brazil, and Portugal the mother country, nativists embraced a mixed-blood identity that struck them as particularly linked to *brasileiridade*.¹²⁸ Race increasingly became a political issue as the number of non-whites increased. In nineteenth century Brazil, slaves and *libertos* constituted overwhelming majorities in four regions: Rio de Janeiro (1840) 71%, Minas Gerais (1836) 73%, São Paulo (1836) 46%, and Pernambuco (1839) 68%. Of these totals, *libertos* made up respectively 16%, 40%, 20%, and 44%. And if the free coloured group was large, it was also the “fastest growing class in nineteenth century Brazilian society.” White fears of such overwhelming percentages are obvious in legislation passed by the newly

¹²⁵ *A Voz do Escravo* was a publication for the expression of abolitionist thought. Its white (or *whitened*) writers proclaimed that journalists had a special role in the civilizing of their country. *A Voz do Escravo* (Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul: Arquivo Municipal, 1881).

¹²⁶ Thomas Flory, “Race and Social Control in Independent Brazil,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 9.2 (1977) 206 and Moura, *Dialética Radical* 152, 169.

¹²⁷ The process of independence from Portugal, while peaceful, intensified anti-Portuguese sentiment as it increased Brazilian nationalism. Bradford Burns, 126.

¹²⁸ Thomas Flory tells of one patriot who, while calling for the overthrow of Dom Pedro I, enthusiastically proclaimed the emperor’s young son - the lily-white Pedro - “a *cabra* like us!” *Cabra* -literally “goat”- had taken on connotations of mixed blood and rural roots and was in common popular use. “Race and Social Control in Independent Brazil,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 9.2 (1977) 206

independent monarchy (1822). Different measures of justice applied to whites and "Negroes and coloured men," a category viewed as a social problem.¹²⁹

One might assume that abolitionists did not share these fears. Such an assumption, however, does not explain the shift in elite attitudes that occurred in the Abolitionist movement. Attitudes after 1870 centred on the benign nature of racial antagonisms in Brazilian society but early emancipationists focused their concern on the success of the slave revolt in Haiti in 1804. Brazil too had revolutionary movements of slaves from the sixteenth to the late eighteenth century, and fears of race war fueled the argument of some members of the white elite for the gradual abolition of slavery.¹³⁰ They felt that this move would diminish the possibility of an reoccurrence of the Haitian experience in Brazil. Others argued for the transformation of slaves into indentured labourers and still others for their deportation to Africa. Within this spectrum of reactions, the theme of mixed racial identity began to appear.¹³¹

Since the beginning of the independence movement in 1821, the rivalry with Portugal had opened all Brazilians, regardless of their colour, to the racial slurs that formed part of Portugal's stereotyped image of the rebellious colony. A decade of promiscuously traded insults led inevitably to a blurring of the lines between rhetoric, race, and nationality, finally forcing all Brazilians into a defensive posture where a mixed racial identity had become confused with something like patriotism.¹³²

Yet, in spite of the emergence of mixed racial identity, race itself was a taboo subject dealt with in circumspect terms. Although political groups on all sides of the crisis after the abdication of Pedro I in 1831 used the 'mulatto lobby,' this strategy was adopted to further nationalistic interests. Its use was twofold: the number of *mulato/libertos* in the population furnished considerable political support in spite of their limited franchise (only property-owners had the vote) and their partial inclusion successfully diluted their growing awareness of the racist nature of Brazilian society. However, while *mulatos/libertos* were useful tools, their needs were not addressed by the 'mulatto press.'¹³³ Rather, it represented the sentiments of nativists who responded to Portuguese charges that Brazil was a "land of monkeys, Negroes and snakes" by declaring that Brazilian upper classes were white and the obvious race mixing of the rest of the population was not a sign of inferiority. Despite open criticism of the bigotry and prejudice of the Portuguese, there were rare references to racial discrimination as an intrinsic part of the social structure of Brazilian society. Consequently, the 'mulatto' newspapers stand more as a harbinger

¹²⁹ Flory, 200.

¹³⁰ See footnote 136 for details on slave resistance.

¹³¹ Célia Maria Marinho de Azevedo, "Abolicionismo e a memória das relações raciais," *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* 26 September, (1994) 5-19.

¹³² Flory:206.

¹³³ Flory:206.

of the notion of mixed-blood identity that became majority thought a century later than as a reflection of the aspirations and concerns of blacks in general.¹³⁴

Before returning to discussion of the black press, it is useful to look back at other movements that, unlike the *mulato* press, more directly reflect the existence of black racial identity from the earliest years of Portuguese colonization. In the 17th century, black slaves first formed religious brotherhoods under the careful eye of the Roman Catholic Church and ruling elites who believed that slaves would be more easily controlled if they adopted their rulers' religious values and traditions. However, unbeknownst to their rulers and owners, Brazilian black brotherhoods, like their ancestral equivalents in western Africa, served multiple social and political purposes within their community. Furthermore, the organizations' religious basis provided a cloak for the continuation of African religious practice. Moura argues that while the brotherhoods defended black interests legally and openly during slavery, their most consequential work was carried on underground. In his opinion, their true objectives were to promote conspiracy, organise rebellions, slave escapes, and assist access to fugitive slave settlements.¹³⁵ Whether legal or underground, the fight to secure rights and freedom for slaves continued into the nineteenth century and, as a matter of course, the brotherhoods became involved in the abolitionist movement.¹³⁶ The *negros* who freed themselves by escaping or resisted by downing tools and the *libertos* who aided them were fundamental elements of the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888.

The experience of one group of *libertos*, in particular, offers insight into later attitudes of both blacks and whites. In May 1888, a group calling itself the Black Guard swore to uphold the post-abolitionary ideals of social reform of José de Patrocínio and Princess Isabel.¹³⁷ The group promoted racial solidarity by not recognising differences between *negros* and *mulatos* in its fight to mobilize and organize former

¹³⁴ Flory:206.

¹³⁵ Moura's analysis of the hidden objectives of the brotherhoods may be due to his position that blacks actively worked to end their enslavement and marginalization using whatever means available. He provides evidence that blacks had reacted to slavery from the beginning of colonial times. For example, the 17th-century Republic of Palmares is the best-known of the fugitive slave settlements called *Quilombos* in Portuguese. There is considerable doubt attached to the available data due to its colonial origins; however, it is possible at least to create an idea of its size and consequence. It apparently covered an area of 27,000 square kilometres in the northeast and developed its economic and political organization along African lines. The population was not just made up of blacks; the presence of whites has been established and was probably the result of raids for women to increase reproduction in a polygamous system. By 1697, three generations of native-born Palmeirenses lived in sixteen villages. Estimates of between 20 and 30 thousand residents make the Republic a contender for the most highly populated region of Brazil at the time. This year also marked the end of the largest African colony as it was destroyed by colonial forces in a massive attack ordered by the Portuguese Crown. *Quilombos* populated by the descendents of slaves still exist in a few rural areas of Brazil. See Mitchell:77-82 and Moura, Chapter 4, *Brasil: Raízes do Protesto Negro*, (São Paulo: Global Editora) 1983.

¹³⁶ Michael Trochim, "Brazilian Black Guard," *The Americas* 44:1 July, (1987) 288.

¹³⁷ Black journalist Patrocínio (1854-1904) had become a symbol of the abolitionist movement because of his powerful writings against slavery. In the absence of her father Pedro II, Princess-Regent Isabel, a committed abolitionist, signed the Golden Law which ended Brazilian slavery in 1888.

slaves in opposition to anti-monarchists. Not adverse to violence, the Black Guard saw itself as the defender of the Princess, of blacks who had built the nation, and the leader of the struggle to achieve equality for non-white members of the population. Others saw them differently. The white press called Black Guard members “simple-minded black people secretly organised by the white government for its own purposes.” Reports spoke of the involvement of the Black Guard in attacks and riots as “civil war and race hatred.” Editorials advised whites not to promote “the armed struggle of the black proletariat against the whites who sustained and treated the blacks with kindness and patience.”¹³⁸ Ever more alarmed warnings against blacks led several black groups to publicly reject the tactics of the Black Guard. Its unfortunate use of violence, and its attachment to political issues that were not of direct importance to the black community distanced the Black Guard from the very people they felt they represented. At the same time, it was unable to maintain support within sectors of the white elite. With the triumph of Republican forces and the fall of the monarchy in 1889, the Black Guard disintegrated. The failure of the Black Guards’ militant effort to confront the issues of race and class discrimination “may have caused black Brazilians to seek alternatives to confrontation as paths to socio-economic advancement.”¹³⁹

The Black Press: an alternative path

Rather than directly confront the status-quo as the Black Guard had done in the nineteenth century, the black press of the early twentieth century at first devoted itself to issues within the black community.¹⁴⁰ To fill the social vacuum caused by deficient coverage of black community affairs by the dominant press, small black-run newspapers began to appear. At first, they recorded social events and local gossip. After the mid-twenties, as well as commentary on the social activities of the community, writers provided educational and moral advice to help their people better their chances in a more competitive world. They said they spoke for *negros* left out of census reports for “whitening” purposes between 1900 and 1920 and for *brasileiros* being pushed to the sidelines of national life by European immigration and racist thought.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Trochim, 297-300.

¹³⁹ Trochim, 297-300.

¹⁴⁰ Until the 1990s, there was rare mention of the black press outside specialised academic circles and black organisations. Clovis Moura in *Sociologia do Negro Brasileiro* 204 affirms that well-known Brazilian writer Nelson Werneck Sodré’s *History of the Press in Brazil* published in 1966, does not register the existence of the black press.

¹⁴¹ Many immigrants called blacks *brasileiros*. Corrêa Leite, 52. For full discussion of the impact of European immigration see Carlos Hasenbalg and Nelson do Valle Silva, *Relações Raciais no Brasil Contemporâneo* (Rio de Janeiro: Rio Fundo Editora, 1992) 106.

Digressing for a moment, it is important to point out the extent of the economic exclusion experienced by the black community since the end of slavery. Florestan Fernandes characterises immigration as a social and economic “calamity” for the *negro* and *mulato* of the state of São Paulo in particular. Numbers alone demonstrate the enormous impact of immigration in the region: in 1888 more than 92,086 immigrants arrived.¹⁴² They rapidly became the primary workers in the city of São Paulo, the industrial capital of the country. As early as 1893, immigrants made up 79% of manufacturing employees, 85.5% of craftsmen, 81% of transportation workers, and 71.6% of those in commercial enterprises. Blacks, thus, were relegated to chronic unemployment and seasonal work with low wages. By the 1920s, despite waning immigration, this bleak economic situation had contributed to the general social disorganization of the black community as a whole.¹⁴³

The origins of the black press lie in the response of black leadership to such exclusion, social disintegration, and absolute destitution of the black community in the first decades of the new century. Black leaders demanded social reconstruction and a re-evaluation of immigration, encouraged the creation of a cohesive black community, and emphasized the worth of blacks in an era that declared them inferior. In sum, the message of the black press was very clear: we are proudly black and we are proudly Brazilian.

The black of Brazil is Brazilian. The fascists [reference to an Italian newspaper in São Paulo] should know that the mulattos who bother them so much have furnished Brazil with illustrious names in literature, the sciences and the military who would honour any civilised country.¹⁴⁴

The message was also that blacks were losing their previous demographic advantage as immigrants flooded into the city and that whitening theories were now classing them as “shameful blemishes on the national character.” Furthermore, writers warned that discriminatory laws were denying blacks access to high positions in the government, military forces, and diplomatic corps.¹⁴⁵ Thus, blacks were losing the opportunities of previous centuries when those few with connections had been able to call upon the patronage system to secure employment and educational opportunities. In

¹⁴² Robert Brent Topik, *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil* (New York: Atheneum, 1972) 261.

¹⁴³ Although immigration slowed after the twenties, the migration of rural workers (who were mainly *negros* and *mulatos*) into the urban centres of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo increased. Alencar, Carpi and Ribeiro, 253. Yet, by 1940 census data indicates that 15,261 (97.04%) employers were white, and a mere 123 (0.78%) were *negro* or *mulato*. Florestan Fernandes, “Immigration and Race Relations in São Paulo,” Magnus Mörner, ed. *Race and Class in Latin America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970) 126-8.

¹⁴⁴ *O Progresso* 17, 13 Oct. (1929) 1.

¹⁴⁵ Obvious racialized language replaced vaguely worded legislation of the past. *O Progresso* 17, 13 Oct. (1929) 1.

addition, rising rates of alcoholism, prostitution, mendicancy and crime among blacks presented white society with images that “justified” their stereotypes.¹⁴⁶

Social and recreational clubs sprang up after 1915 to provide non-discriminatory space for black social activity. Small newsletters began to circulate in order to announce activities in some of the larger organizations. A shift in the focus of newsletters occurred with the appearance of *Clarim d'Alvorada* and similar newspapers in São Paulo in the mid-twenties.¹⁴⁷ These were dedicated to the development of racial pride and solidarity.¹⁴⁸ This important phase of the black press is characterised by coverage of social events, puritanical counseling, pleas for financial support and for racial solidarity.

First, commentary on numerous dances, baptisms, weddings, inaugurations, and musical events was, in effect, public notice that blacks behaved socially just as whites did. But more importantly, writers focused a good deal of their attention on the modification of the behavior of the black community that met with white disapproval. Since blacks had to “act white” or be “whitened” to achieve social mobility in Brazil, class became the predominant element in the campaign to elevate the black community. To remedy the “social, intellectual, and material precariousness” of their fellow blacks, writers largely concentrated on what they viewed as unacceptable low-class behavior of both men and women. Throughout the twenties and thirties, columnists alternately harangued and praised their readers by criticising low moral standards while encouraging behavior that would reflect the true potential of the black community. Writers frequently deplored the effect objectionable comportment had on the images whites held of blacks. One commented that if blacks were going to get drunk they should do it at home so as not “to shame an entire race” with their actions.¹⁴⁹ On the 41st anniversary of the abolition of slavery, Newton Braga advised blacks to try harder. If they weren't getting ahead, their own lack of initiative was at fault.

Negro lift up your head; look me in the eye. Come on. What? Why this sadness?
Why this humility? Why this submission? No, *negro*, this is not the right way. You

¹⁴⁶ Mitchell, 122.

¹⁴⁷ The publication of *Clarim d'Alvorada* in 1924 marks the turning point in the politicization of the black press. For detailed discussion of the early development of the black press, see Roger Bastide, *O Negro Na Imprensa e Na Literatura* (São Paulo: Universidade de São Paulo, 1972); Miriam Nicolau Ferrara, *A Imprensa Negra* (São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial do Estado, 1984); Michael Mitchell, “Racial Consciousness and the Political Attitudes and Behaviour of Blacks in São Paulo, Brazil,” (Diss., Indiana University, 1977); *Jornais da Raça Negra, São Paulo, 1928-1963* microfilm Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil); José Correia Leite and Cuti, *Assim Disse O Velho Militante*. (São Paulo: Ministério de Cultura, 1992); Ubirajara Damasceno de Motta, “Jornegro: um projeto da comunicação afro-brasileiro,” *Revista de Cultura Vozes* Petrópolis 82 I (Jan/Jun 1988) 48-9; Clóvis Moura, *Imprensa Negra*, (São Paulo: Secretariat de Cultura, 1984) and Regina Pahim Pinto, “Movimento Negro em São Paulo: Luta e Identidade,” (Diss., University of São Paulo, 1993).

¹⁴⁸ Mitchell, 122.

¹⁴⁹ Pahim Pinto, 228.

are in your home. You can step firmly. Look forward. Speak loudly. What the devil! It's about time. You have slept too much. You have fooled around too much. Really too much. Now let's go to work. To study. Let's take a bath of civilization. That's it, grab a brush with enthusiasm. Energetic soap. Essence of confidence. And let's go to school. To university. To progress. Haven't you heard of this thing progress?...Let's go. This is not Africa and so what if it were....It is necessary to get ahead in life. Leave behind your barbaric dances. Your songs of captivity, of longing, of melancholy....Let's go, *negro*.¹⁵⁰

Pride and progress would come from leaving behind African culture and the vestiges of slavery. Many writers promoted Christian values as they damned primitive African religious rites in the midst of wild drinking and dancing. This attitude can be seen as a denial of African culture and origins, the triumph of 'bourgeoisization' according to Bastide. Black writers — fledgling members of a small middle class—echoed the aspirations of the masses: socio-racial ascension. It is evident that to achieve this goal they had to affirm upper-class values and maintain distance from behaviour seen as characteristic of lower classes—black, white or brown.¹⁵¹ In other words, the puritanical nature of the press in Brazil reflected the incorporation of white middle class values by black writers.

A second characteristic of the black press was its continual struggle to survive. Poverty was the major obstacle to newsletter circulation. Readership was small and the production of each edition an enormous financial struggle.¹⁵² Nonetheless, the appeal for support was not simply a monetary issue. Pleas for solidarity show that the writers' primary aim was to represent and motivate the black community. However, as a tiny middle-class minority within an enormous poverty-stricken majority, they faced considerable difficulties in transmitting their own growing racial conscientization to their fellow blacks. Their message of racial pride confronted the complexes and worries about the future that burdened most blacks faced with destitution and discrimination.¹⁵³ Moura suggests that the conscientization of a so-called black elite stems from their awareness of the ramifications of racial discrimination whereas the black masses simply struggle to stay alive. While 'black elite' is a somewhat controversial term in Brazil, it denotes the educated or semi-educated men who took on leadership roles within the black community. Many were civil servants and typographers as these were professions open

¹⁵⁰ Newton Braga, editorial, *Leite Criólo* 1:1, 13 May 1929. (This newsletter was published for the black community in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais.)

¹⁵¹ Roger Bastide, 'A Imprensa Negra do Estado de São Paulo,' *Estudos Afro-Brasileiros* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1973) 129-156; Pahim Pinto, 232.

¹⁵² Estimates vary widely but the circulation of *Voz*, the largest newspaper, at its highest point of production was probably under 2,000 copies. Leite, 56.

¹⁵³ Regina Pahim Pinto believes that the black community on the whole suffered greatly from a complex of inferiority and there seemed little hope that anything would ever change for the better. Pahim Pinto, 55.

to non-whites.¹⁵⁴ Their middle-class status had most often been achieved through patronage networks left over from slavery— “our protectors, the lawyers and landowners” in the words of Corrêia Leite.¹⁵⁵ These leaders fought on two fronts: as blacks they struggled to rouse fellow blacks to shed their feelings of inferiority and apathy; as black Brazilians they affirmed their own status as new members of the middle class. The linking of these two elements is obvious in their preoccupation with white social acceptance.

Other factors affected the writers of the black press in the first decades of the century. The bitter memories of slavery were still present and the fight to whiten had begun. As we know, predictions were being made that the *negro* would disappear or almost disappear by the end of the century. And, most significantly, blacks believed what they were told: there is no racial problem here. “And we *negros*,” said Corrêia Leite, “had to be grateful for this false racial tolerance, this false sentimentalism. Nobody agreed with protests and demands.” Also, they were constantly reminded that Brazil was not like the United States where blacks were lynched and had “no rights whatsoever.”¹⁵⁶ But, while the black press like the dominant white press reported the lynchings and violence of American race relations, it also held up American blacks as models of racial pride for Brazilian blacks.¹⁵⁷

Assimilation vs. segregation

O Progresso, a small newspaper put out by Lino Guedes between 1928 and 1931, offered wide-reaching coverage of the U.S. that ranged from comment on the career of Josephine Baker, black boxing champions, and baby contests to elections, lynching and segregation.¹⁵⁸ The position of blacks in Brazilian society was measured by the position of blacks in the United States. This type of yardstick was a way of calling attention to a racial incident in Brazil without having to face charges of incitement of

¹⁵⁴ Moura, *Dialética Radical* 228. The very few women who participated mainly held subordinate positions. Of 244 collaborators, 15 were women, of whom only one was an editor. Pahim Pinto, 64.

¹⁵⁵ José Corrêia Leite, 55.

¹⁵⁶ Corrêia Leite, 198. Michael Mitchell coined the term “opinion elite” to more aptly describe the so-called black elite group that sought to combat the psychological fragmentation of their people as well as their economic and social marginalization. Mitchell, 153.

¹⁵⁷ Pahim Pinto, 270.

¹⁵⁸ In the 19th century, many *mulatos* had achieved literary success. Indeed, many of Brazil’s most famous writers have been *mulatos*. In the eyes of upper-class admirers, the literary talent of a writer such as Machado de Assis made him an “honourary” white. Assis was declared a “Greek” by diplomat and statesman Joaquim Nabuco who defended Assis when someone called him a *mulato*. In contrast, Lino Guedes, born in 1897 to ex-slaves, was the first black Brazilian writer to declare himself *negro* as a statement of racial awareness. Guedes assumed the consequences of openly declaring his identity as a *negro* which led to his never receiving public recognition of his literary talent. Guedes is considered to have introduced *negritude* to Brazil in the 1920s with his Afro-Brazilian literary style. Oswaldo de Camargo, “Lino Guedes: 90 anos de nascimento. É de esquecimento.” *Jornal da Tarde* 27 06 87.

racial and social unrest. For example, there had been no schooling for Brazilian blacks since Abolition while North-American blacks, “persecuted by prejudice, fight undaunted for the ABCs.”¹⁵⁹

Most often, however, American race relations were held to be the opposite of what black writers desired for their country. Brazil, they said, could be sure that it was well ahead of ‘cultured’ countries when it extinguished colour prejudice.¹⁶⁰ “Unfortunate incidents” were blamed on foreign immigrants unable to understand the workings of Brazilian society.

Colour prejudice does not encounter fertile ground in Brazil. One or another isolated case occurs. However such attitudes do not arise from true race hatred as in the United States but rather from the fact that foreigners often refer to the country - in a pejorative sense - as a “country of blacks.”¹⁶¹

The Brazilian elite made great efforts to prove to the outside world that Brazil was not a “country of blacks.” Yet, according to *O Progresso*, these same Brazilians would be proclaiming their African ancestors during national celebrations. This duality of identity is a constant in Brazilian race relations and the black press is no exception. Protests against discrimination and prejudice are interspersed with glowing descriptions of Brazilian integration with its fraternalism and race mixing.

Comparison with the segregation and violence of American race relations served to affirm the superiority of the Brazilian racial system. Freyre’s thesis of racial assimilation became the backbone of Brazilian identity because assimilation seemed the only alternative to the American example of racial violence and hatred. “Racial cooperation” and the fact that so many blacks had occupied “positions of prominence and confidence” in Brazil were compared to “a new wave of hatred, anger, prejudice [that] is sweeping over the great North American nation.” Writers affirmed that the campaign against American blacks was worsening to the point where “the black is below the lowest level of animal.”¹⁶² More evidence of the adoption of assimilationist thought is the acceptance of the idea that the disappearance of blacks was a solution to racial problems. One Brazilian black author declared Brazilian assimilation an “enormous advantage” that Brazil had over the “Yankee civilisation.”

The United States - in spite of this vigourous campaign against the black, in spite of this ever-growing race hatred - has to deal with a huge black clot that hinders its circulatory civilising system....Where the collaboration of blacks is considered

¹⁵⁹ Horácio Cunha, *O Progresso* 1, 23 June 1928, 1.

¹⁶⁰ *O Progresso* 9, 24 Feb. 1929, 1.

¹⁶¹ *O Progresso* 35, April 1931, 2.

¹⁶² *O Progresso* 9 24 Feb 1929, 1.

negative, the black isolates himself, creates his own individual identity and civilisation within the alien civilisation. So, for this reason, the black problem is considered the worst problem in the United States. Brazil, open to all races and accepting the black the way it did, has solved the racial problem in a very simple way. The black is disappearing; he is deep in the process of fusion after having participated intensely in the material and moral grandeur of this country. This is why we do not admire them ... we have enormous advantages....¹⁶³

Moreover, *The Chicago Defender* and other American black newspapers assured Brazilian black writers that Brazilians were on the right track. Miscegenation was a positive process.¹⁶⁴ In contrast to dominant white supremacist views, this black American's support for race-mixing is significant evidence that assimilation represented the "liberal" thought of the time

Brazil offers a present and first hand evidence of the solution of the race problem by intermarriage. This example will not be lost on the American Negro. To him it is becoming plainer and plainer that the longer he remains a group within a group, the longer will the stronger group prey upon the weaker and less numerous. Far from admitting that miscegenation produces an offspring inferior to either, the conviction is spreading, founded on experience, that such offspring are wise and stronger.¹⁶⁵

Undoubtedly, the support of North American blacks was an influence on Brazilian black writers' acceptance of assimilation through miscegenation, but the most important influence was national. Patriotism was paramount in their struggle to deal with the massive immigration that so directly affected them. Criticism of discriminatory practices served as an opportunity to stress the loyalty of "true" Brazilians who had lived together for centuries before the Europeans brought racial prejudice into the country. They also stressed their contribution to the formation of the Brazilian people. Such nationalistic feelings grew as the black movement evolved through the efforts of writers like José Corrêia Leite of *Clarim d'Alvorada* to contest the growing refusal of ruling elites to consider race an issue of any significance in Brazil. In 1928 his group began to organise a Black Youth Congress in São Paulo. The news caused enormous repercussions and the Congress was called "a provocation by racial agitators" by city newspapers. Planning the Congress acted as a catalyst to draw together diverse factions in the black community as organisers who realized its potential significance approached blacks

¹⁶³ Pahim Pinto, 268.

¹⁶⁴ José Corrêia Leite and his colleagues at the *Clarim* were visited by Robert Abbott of *The Chicago Defender* (c.1924) and for some years exchanged newspapers with them. *O Velho Milirante* 78-9.

¹⁶⁵ David J. Hellwig, "A New Frontier in a Racial Paradise: Robert S. Abbott's Brazilian Dream," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 25.1 (1988) 59-67 and "Opportunities in Brazil: South American Country Offers First Hand Knowledge of the Solving of the Race Question," *Baltimore Afro-American* January 29, 1916 ctd. In *African American Reflections on Brazil's Racial Paradise* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992) 36.

in the professional world. Some declined to participate but those who accepted helped politicize the black movement and later became the leaders of the *Frente Negra*.

A Frente Negra

Built in 1931 on the foundations of the previous newspapers, associations and the organizational process of the Negro Youth Congress, the *Frente Negra Brasileira* (FNB) was an avowedly political organization that pushed for equality. Its leadership widened the scope of activism to include a militia, a newspaper launched in 1933 and eventually, a political party in 1936. By 1937 it had attracted as many as 200,000 members.¹⁶⁶ The vitality and respectability of the *Frente* made it a centralizing force in the initial bringing together of diverse currents in the black community. The politicization of the black movement was second only to Abolition in importance to blacks in Brazil.¹⁶⁷

The increase in blacks' enthusiasm for politics grew from their involvement in Vargas's 1930 presidential campaign. Indeed, plans for the Youth Congress were superseded by this involvement and also by the grave consequences of the international economic crisis of 1929. Most Brazilians were affected by the fall of the price of coffee, the mainstay of the economy. But the black community was even more vulnerable to financial instability and they sank ever deeper into poverty. Vargas seemed their only hope. He lost the election, but with military backing managed to wrest power from the traditional rural-based elites who had dominated Brazilian politics since the times of slavery. For the first time in Brazilian history, a government included the masses in the political process. Black leadership in São Paulo viewed the Vargas takeover as a long-awaited opportunity for blacks to collaborate in the transformation of Brazilian society.

It was not just a time to get on with the future, but also to settle accounts with the past. Corrêia Leite, in the *Clarim d'Alvorada*, declared that there was "enormous joy to see that band of families of slave owners swept from power."¹⁶⁸ His group resolved to launch an ideological offensive to advance the cause of blacks and the *Frente* plotted its course in a spirit of hope. Their expectation was remarkable and the mainstream white press that had largely ignored the black population up to this point, began to pay attention.

¹⁶⁶ There are contradictory estimates of the membership. Totals range from 8,000 to 200,000. The *Voç* estimated 100,000 in 1934 and Fernandes refers to 200,000. Corrêia Leite was very skeptical of this last figure. Whatever the true numbers might have been, the point is that membership grew very fast and the Front was larger than any previous black organization. Pahim Pinto, 91.

¹⁶⁷ Corrêia Leite, 91.

¹⁶⁸ Corrêia Leite, 91.

Last night's meeting was truly noteworthy, both in terms of attendance, which was enormous, and of the speeches given....One visibly feels the awakening of a national consciousness among the black Brazilians, driving them toward more direct participation in the social and political life of the country.¹⁶⁹

A participant in one of the meetings recalled many years later that “blacks wanted to participate because they felt themselves to be the greatest beneficiaries of the revolution [of 1930]. The slavocracy had been deposed from power—the men who had always scorned and despised blacks. Now it was time for blacks to take part.”¹⁷⁰ Black leaders were amazed at the outpouring of enthusiasm and wondered what their own response to it should be.

To begin, they nominated blacks for public office. In spite of a whirlwind of activity, however, with volunteers working day and night to put up posters during the 1933 campaign for São Paulo city council, the *Frente* candidate, Arlindo Veiga dos Santos, did not win. Neither did any other black candidate. Although the black vote was certainly affected by literacy requirements and the clientelistic manipulation of rural voters by landowners, the main reason the *Frente* failed to mobilise blacks politically lies within the organisation itself. In its first months of existence, the *Frente* had attracted a wide range of supporters from the black community, but the organization had very quickly shifted its focus to align itself with the fascist Integralist movement, thereby alienating a large portion of the black community. Corrêia Leite, for example, considered the embracing of *Integralismo* or *patrianovismo* as the death knell of the black movement.¹⁷¹

Arlindo Veiga dos Santos was the most prominent leader of the FNB to adopt Vargas's concept of *patrianovismo*, a nationalistic and authoritarian ideology adapted from European fascism. An uninformed admirer of Hitler's racial ideology, Arlindo saw the creation of a new race as part of the construction of a new national political structure. Arlindo was not simply expounding a type of Brazilian *négritude*, but rather the emergence of a new people from the past shared experience and blood of blacks, aboriginals and whites. These three groups had formed the matrix which would result in one brown Brazilian race. Racism would gradually decrease as Catholicism, monarchism, and authoritarianism took root and became the dominant political values.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ George Reid Andrews, “Black Protest in São Paulo,” *Dominguez*, 312-3.

¹⁷⁰ Reid Andrews, “Black Protest” 313.

¹⁷¹ Corrêia Leite talks of his opposition to the black movement taking on any political fight other than their own throughout his memoirs of the black press. Also see Reid Andrews, “Black Protest” 314-5.

¹⁷² Moura, *A Dialética Radical*, 185-196.

As we know, he was not promoting an original idea. Nativists had expounded the notion of *mestiço* identity as Brazilianness a century before, and this belief appeared in editorial comment in black publications throughout the 1920s. Nor was the idea of “a new race” limited to a Brazilian context. During the same period, Mexican intellectual, José Vasconcelos, was presenting his thesis of *cosmic race*, the racial amalgamation of all the groups in Mexico.¹⁷³ In the United States, Franz Boas suggested that miscegenation presented a possible solution to the American racial problem. Clearly, Freyre’s notion of mixed-race identity was neither an original idea nor exclusively an elite one.

Summing up, we see that the black press passed through three stages of development. The first occurred in the early decades of the century when very small newsletters reported on the social affairs of the black community. They carried news of weddings, baptisms, funerals, and other events that were ignored by the dominant press of the day. The second stage emerged in the 1920s with editors such as José Corrêa Leite taking on the role of demanding respect for blacks in a rapidly changing society. Leite’s newspaper *O Clarim d’Alvorada* was particularly vocal in the fight to gain recognition of the contribution blacks had made to the formation of Brazilian society. The exclusion of black Brazilians was contrasted to the favouritism being shown to European immigrants. Until the 1930s, the newspapers struggled against severe financial difficulties and the apathy of the majority of the black community. This began to change with the third stage of the black press which existed between 1933 and 1937. The press became more combative and politicized as it gained significant numbers of supporters many of whom were supporters of Vargas. A new era seemed to hold the promise of a better life for the black community. In this climate of optimism, one person, in particular, merits attention for his role is significant as a founder of the *Frente Negra* and an editorialist of *A Voz da Raça*, its newspaper.

In the next chapter my attention is on Arlindo Veiga dos Santos—passionate supporter of fascist political ideals, yet constant defender of the black community against discrimination and exclusion. In many ways, the duality of his personality is a clear illustration of the dilemma of a community beset by forces that worked against the formation of racial solidarity. How could solidarity emerge when the middle-class urban blacks—poor but educated—who ran black organisations articulated their views in a manner not shared by the impoverished and oppressed majority? A very

¹⁷³ Sabine Mabardi, “Historia, Mito e Identidad: El Discurso Hegeliano de Vasconcelos,” unpublished paper, 1994, 12.

small number of relatively better off blacks fought for racial awareness in the midst of an overwhelming majority of extremely poor blacks fighting simply to survive.¹⁷⁴

Critics have categorized Arlindo as one of a group of black intellectuals who wholeheartedly adopted the “discourse, patterns, norms and rules” of dominant white society. This group, they argue, made no attempt to help the black community as a whole develop its identity and Arlindo is singled out as an example of the gap between the two elements of the community. Arlindo Veiga dos Santos used radical racial discourse to express his “white, elitist, and conservative interior.”¹⁷⁵ Yet Veiga dos Santos maintained that his principal goal was to solve racial problems within a nationalism based on fascist ideals. The adoption of the slogan “God, Country, Family and Race” as the masthead of *A Voz da Raça* is indicative of its identification with the Brazilian Integralist group whose slogan was “God, Country and Family.” Through his editorials in *Voz da Raça* we see the difficulties of communication between opposing groups of black leadership and in turn their relationship with the masses. In addition, we trace the dissemination of nationalistic ideology in the black community.

¹⁷⁴ After Abolition, attempts to “rehabilitate” black experience of resistance to slavery through music, religion and language became more restricted to a small minority of “cultured” blacks. Moura, *A Dialética Radical* 193.

¹⁷⁵ Moura, *A Dialética Radical* 188-189, 193.

ONLY WE, THE NEGROS OF BRAZIL, KNOW WHAT IT IS TO FEEL COLOUR PREJUDICE¹⁷⁶

A Voz da Raça

From the first issue of *A Voz da Raça* in March, 1933, there is a visible change in the focus of the black press.¹⁷⁷ Only rarely are North American race relations used as terms of reference for Brazilian racial dynamics; rather, emphasis is put on the patriotic *brasileiridade* of the black element of the population. Arlindo zealously embraced nationalism and it became the rallying cry of his newspaper, *A Voz da Raça*.¹⁷⁸ To suggestions that the “black” north should be separate from the “white” south, Arlindo argued for unity, stating that “we are family.”

We want union with all Brazilians, black and white, with no distinctions as to colour, politics, religion or belief. If we have been kept out of the political arena, the blame must fall squarely on the shoulders of the so-called Brazilian aristocracy who were ashamed of their own descent, so they pushed us out by granting concessions to foreigners. We were displaced even in agriculture. Our fight is clear. We want our complete social and economic emancipation. We blacks want to be involved in every discussion on nationalism that is held by our white brothers.¹⁷⁹

The argument for inclusion runs throughout the years of publication of *A Voz*. With variations, Arlindo Veiga dos Santos and other writers use it to thread together the principal objectives of the newspaper and the *Frente Negra*:

1. To affirm the willingness of blacks to participate in the construction of a new nationality based on integration and assimilation and at the same time express adamant support for Vargas.

¹⁷⁶ Taken from masthead of *A Voz da Raça* during its years of publication, 1933-1937. “There is no prejudice says the white, well, paint yourself black and go out into the street. In 72 hours you will have changed your mind” was printed below.

¹⁷⁷ *A Voz da Raça* 1.1 March 18 1933, 1.

¹⁷⁸ *A Voz da Raça* became the most successful of the black newspapers that had struggled to survive. In a largely illiterate community, its circulation was between 1,000 and 1,500 copies. In addition, it counted on a fixed group of writers and volunteers. “Na Imprensa Negra, a luta constante pela afirmação da raça.” *Imprensa Brasileira* 3:3 September 10, (1988) 9.

¹⁷⁹ *A Voz da Raça* 1.9, May 13 (1933) 1.

2. To reject assumptions of racial inferiority or superiority and denounce discrimination and prejudice.
3. To affirm the leadership role of the *Frente*, a self-declared socio-political organization.
4. To gain recognition of the founding role of blacks in Brazilian history.
5. To inculcate pride in the black population.
6. To provide educational opportunities and other benefits to the black community.¹⁸⁰

The first two purposes are the crux of Arlindo's struggle for rights and recognition and merit our full attention. Still, it is of utmost importance to look first at his role as editor of the newspaper of the major black organization he had helped found. Although much of his writing is concerned with rebuttals to white critics, it was also aimed at persuading the outside community that the leaders of the FNB were dedicated to eradicating socially unacceptable behaviour within the black community. Arlindo frequently directed his editorials from an intellectual high ground of moral superiority over the black population as a whole; he was very confident that the FNB leadership represented all blacks. The law had liberated slaves but had not taken the trouble to elevate them mentally and morally, and the FNB proposed to take on the task of doing what the "government doesn't want to or cannot do." Arlindo further declared, "our aim is to instruct and civilize; we will teach the most modern notions of hygiene [he was a proponent of Eugenics] and instill patriotism."¹⁸¹ To allay white fears of a large black organization, he assured anxious whites that "we are not here to cultivate race hatred but to combat it with healthy measures of order. The FNB has had to fight against the '*maús costumes*' [bad habits or behaviour] of blacks."¹⁸² It is within this assertion of moral leadership that we begin to see the defensive stance the FNB took to deal with dominant press charges of racial incitement.

They say that the actions of the FNB may bring to Brazil a question that has not existed here before and may result in racial division. We are preaching nothing of the sort. What we want is to always be at the side of our white brothers in all areas of activity, especially those that affect our nationality. We want a Brazil that is strong with the unity of all....[here he again puts the blame on the "aristocracy"]....The *negro* is tired; no one is more Brazilian than the *negro*, Brazilian for 400 years....We, the directors of the FNB, are here to declare and affirm these

¹⁸⁰ *A Voz da Raça* 1.9, May 13 (1933) 1

¹⁸¹ *A Voz da Raça* 1.2, March 25 1933, 2. Veiga dos Santos declared in issue 3, April 1933 that Eugenics was the solution to the awful conditions in the city of São Paulo. "Eugenics! Eugenics for the grandeur of the Race! Eugenics! The reader is reminded that Eugenics took on a meaning of sanitation and moral improvement in Brazil; it did not have the same emphasis on "breeding" as in Europe and North America.

¹⁸² *A Voz da Raça* 1.8, 6 May 1933, 2.

truths that must be said as thousands of *negros* do not know them and judge themselves inferior to other groups simply because of their pigmentation. I say this with authority because I have taken care to closely study the mentality of our people.¹⁸³

Thus, we see the role of the FNB as an intellectual group that would lead its people to their rightful place in Brazilian society. However, the position of black intellectuals in Brazil was ambiguous as they felt they were caught between two worlds. A colleague of Veiga dos Santos, Humberto Campos, cited the words of a black character from a novel to illustrate the difficulties faced by black leadership.

The tragedy of the black begins when he like me acquires the right to frequent those places where people of my race only open doors, receive hats or accept tips. I am a doctor and I am a *negro*. I feel more intensely each day the reality. The *negro americano* isolated himself and created in his midst a black aristocracy.¹⁸⁴

In Brazil, black intellectuals were not comfortable in black circles or accepted in the white elite. Campos' character went on to complain that there was no solidarity in Brazil, that blacks would not get together to change things. The frustrated intellectual, Arlindo Veiga dos Santos, protested that the *Povo* (the people) only thought about having a good time and he said that, for this reason, they would never be able to get ahead.¹⁸⁵ He thought it would be a miracle if ten million blacks were able to shake off their "apathy and mediocrity" to join together to reverse the effects of the monarchy's refusal to help blacks after abolition.¹⁸⁶ His pessimism is clear. Upon losing his bid for local office in 1933, he declared bitterly, "the black has become the enemy of the black."¹⁸⁷ In spite of his frustration with the *Povo*, however, his ambitions were most seriously compromised by a lack of support from other leading members of the black community.

From the beginnings of the FNB, Arlindo, as president, had confronted the animosity of black leaders who protested his use of the organization as a vehicle for his own political beliefs. In 1931 José Corrêia Leite resigned after arguing with dos Santos over the Integralist tone of the Statutes of the *Frente Negra*.

¹⁸³ *A Voz da Raça* 1.9, 13 May 1933, 1.

¹⁸⁴ *A Voz da Raça* 1.27, 9 Dec. 1933, 4. The novel is *Deserto Verde* written by Henrique Pongetti.

¹⁸⁵ *A Voz da Raça* 2.33, 17 Mar. 1934. This issue marks the first anniversary of the newspaper.

¹⁸⁶ *A Voz da Raça* 1.26, 25 Nov. 1933, 1.

¹⁸⁷ *A Voz da Raça* 1.4, 22 April 1933, 1.

I [Leite] went home and wrote a letter of resignation from the FNB Council and in it I explained that I was against the political ideas of the president, especially those absurd ones of restoring the monarchy. I put forth my position of not mixing political convictions with the black movement. I respect others' politics just as they should respect mine. But within the black movement nobody should impose their political ideas.¹⁸⁸

In Corrêia Leite's memoirs of the development of the black movement in the twenties and thirties, he frequently refers to the "semi-fascist" tendencies of the *Frente Negra*. When dos Santos called on blacks in 1933 to enlist in the militia organized by the FNB, Corrêia Leite criticised its close alliance with national Integralists.

[Some blacks thought] that the Integralist Action group was going to solve the problem of blacks....[therefore ignoring that] the black problem is the problem of blacks. It is not a question of paternalism, of needing anyone. Integralists speak of integration but in a general sense. They do not speak specifically of the black as we do. To us the problem is specific. I, for example, have always spoken against party affiliation whether left or right. As blacks our question is separate; it is ours. We have fought to make blacks aware that they can defend their own cause and not have to depend on others to do it for them.¹⁸⁹

Corrêia Leite's home was ransacked after his denunciation of Veiga dos Santos. This incident received coverage in mainstream newspapers and resulted in a significant loss of prestige for the *Frente Negra*. Factionalism was a severe problem for the organization which underwent six major disputes during its seven years of existence.¹⁹⁰ Much of the divergence hinged on Corrêia's theme: the *Frente* had become a fascist organization that had little relation to the interests of the black population.

Indeed, on one occasion, Arlindo wrote blaming "Jewish bosses and foreigners" for some particular occurrence and later went to the extreme of expressing admiration for Hitler in his editorials. Even after being advised of Hitler's hatred of non-Aryans, Arlindo did not desist.

What do we care if Hitler does not want black blood in his land. The New Germany takes pride in its Race. We too, we Brazilians, we have a Race. We do not want to know about Aryans. We want a Brazil *negro* and *mestiço* that has never and will never betray the Nation...Viva Brazil – Nationalist and Christian.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Corrêia Leite, 94.

¹⁸⁹ Corrêia Leite, 118.

¹⁹⁰ Mitchell, 137.

¹⁹¹ *A Voz da Raça* 1.27, 9 Dec. 1933, 1.

This type of ardent nationalism allied Veiga dos Santos more closely with the Integralists as it distanced the FNB from the concerns of leaders like Corrêa Leite. Arlindo's editorials became more aligned than ever with nationalist thought. His support for Vargas was total.

[Vargas is] the most respected man in whom the Brazilian people put all their trust, the only possible saviour of this great country Brazil. If you are a friend of the present illustrious chief of the Nation, you are a friend and merit the respect of the National Black People...Despite discrimination, it is now a little better. We must work to keep a great man like Vargas.¹⁹²

In his drive to consolidate the power necessary to “modernize” the country, Vargas promoted strong national unification and a radical assimilative process for immigrants. In 1938 he passed a law forbidding “alien” teachers and the use of languages other than Portuguese in schools to combat the growing dominance of German in the south.¹⁹³ This policy, in particular, confirmed Arlindo's belief that Vargas was an ally in his own fight against foreigners and also that Vargas' assimilative measures would improve the lot of blacks in Brazilian society.

As my interest lies mainly in the role Arlindo Veiga dos Santos played in the formation of identity in the black community, I focus less on his evaluation of the foreign element and more on his view of assimilation. However, both elements are reflected in his unwavering support for the notion of one merged racial identity. In his editorials, Arlindo brandished the theme of mixed-blood identity to accuse immigrants of bringing discrimination to Brazil.

What would have happened to our Brazil if we had affirmed our race – *lusó-indio-negro* – instead of making our National Home into an international meeting place...in which any foreigner who arrived yesterday has rights to order the rest of us around? What would Brazil be today if our Black People had not always been negated and who—while the banquet was being prepared for the immigrants—were on the margins of national life ceding their place to all the opportunists who just touched land? This mania that innumerable imbeciles have of wanting to turn the Brazilian Nation into an Aryan people is destroying the *Raça Mestiça* [Mixed Race] that is Brazil. Why then don't we always affirm our *lusó-indio-negro* Race as it was and continues to be – something new and superb in the world?¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² *A Voz da Raça* 1.14, 24 June 24 1933, 1.

¹⁹³ Takashi Maceyama, “Japanese in Brazil,” Dominguez, 174.

¹⁹⁴ *A Voz da Raça* 1.12, 10 June 1933, 1.

Like Freyre, Arlindo looked at the past with nostalgia. He called for a return of a “reformed Old Brazil” which, in his opinion, was a fraternal country free from petty prejudices and one in which blacks and whites were “brothers.”¹⁹⁵ The publication of history books that showed the historical participation of blacks in a more positive light proved his point. In June 1933, Arlindo recommended João Ribeiro’s *História do Brasil* as a book that should be consulted by ignorant foreigners who knew nothing of the role of blacks in the formation of the country. By August of 1934, it was apparently Freyre’s book *Casa Grande e Senzala* that came under review. Although not identified, authorship seems obvious to anyone familiar with Freyre’s work. Arlindo praised the chroniclers of the colonial period and the nineteenth century who recognized the value of the *negro* in the formation of the Brazilian people. He reviewed the argument presented in the unidentified book.

The slave, in spite of vices, functioned as a social factor, modifying our habits and customs. The *negro* was a robust civilising agent. Miscegenation modified the relationships between master and slave thus “sweetening” our customs and producing the *mestiço* who now makes up the bulk of the population. To a certain degree, it is also responsible for the beauty of our people. Still today there are the prettiest types of our women who are these agile, strong and smart girls with “sweetly” browned foreheads, black eyes, and heads of full black hair.¹⁹⁶

Ironically, as literary production increased its coverage of the role of the black in the formation of Brazil, the black press began to falter. Over the next year or so, *A Voz da Raça* appeared sporadically. After a gap of four and a half months in 1935, Arlindo re-appeared to praise the organization of the Afro-Brazilian Congress held in 1934, an event he was sure would go a long way towards development of awareness of the value of the black race. As previously mentioned, this congress was organised by Freyre. Its treatment of *o negro brasileiro* was limited to studies of folklore, linguistics, “ethno-psychiatric” reports, histories of slavery, a blood type study that “scientifically” proved there were minimal numbers of “pure” blacks in the population and so on. There was not one study on the contemporary plight of blacks in Brazil.¹⁹⁷ Contrary to Arlindo’s hopes, the images of blacks that were propagated by the Congress were static and folkloric; they certainly were not images of fellow citizens in dire need of equal treatment.

¹⁹⁵ *A Voz da Raça* 1-4, April 1933, 1.

¹⁹⁶ *A Voz da Raça* 2-41, 11 August 1934, 1.

¹⁹⁷ Studies presented at First Afro-Brazilian Congress in Recife in 1934. Vol1 *Estudos Afro-Brasileiros*, (Rio de Janeiro: Ariel Editora, 1935).

A Voz struggled on. Only six issues came out in 1935. In early 1936, Arlindo warned of the dangers of following “whitening” theories that would “annihilate” blacks and pleaded for support from the outside community.

If the authorities would only recognise the value of the programs of the FNB in the improvement of the Black Race – people dress better, have better manners. But we wait in vain. They don’t understand. God help the *Frente Negra Brasileira!*¹⁹⁸

Arlindo was not to contribute to *A Voz* for almost a year after his desperate cry for recognition. During his absence, other writers lamented the lack of solidarity that was blocking any progress. “Wake up your intelligence,” they told fellow blacks, “with education and good manners we can overcome.” The year of 1936 was not auspicious for the FNB. Three important leaders died and the community was not rallying to the FNB’s call for unity. Nonetheless, Arlindo’s return to the front page of *A Voz* in April of 1937 was marked by renewed optimism that blacks would eventually win recognition and inclusion. Once again he acclaimed publications that were focusing on the contribution of blacks in the construction of the country. As before, he did not identify the authors, but it is clear he was referring to Freyre’s message of positive miscegenation. Arlindo celebrated the return of *o negro brasileiro* to the national scene.

Today there is serious literature that has moved away from the racist romanticism of the past to enter the rich field of observation of reality in a sociological dissection of our national situation of miscegenation...that names the African element and has resulted in a glorification of the truth and, finally, the national rehabilitation of the sons of Henrique Dias.¹⁹⁹

In Arlindo’s opinion, the sociological affirmation of the value of blacks stood as a final condemnation of the “hollow scientism” of the past. Congratulations were due all those “heroes of the great campaign” that was underway in Brazil to incorporate black culture. This inclusion would also mean the realization of the potential of his people. His optimism allowed him to soften his previous position on immigrants and include them as the most recent element in the process of racial formation. He now declared that the *Frente Negra* had the support and respect of all Brazilians, “it is the largest and

¹⁹⁸ *A Voz da Raça* 3.52, April 1936, 1.

¹⁹⁹ *A Voz da Raça* 4.64, April 1937, 1. Henrique Dias led mulatto and black troops against Dutch invaders of Brazil in the 17th century.

best black organization ever and there are no more factional splits.²²⁰⁰ He continued to affirm his belief that change was in the air.

He was right, but the change that occurred was not what he anticipated. On November 10, 1937, Vargas declared the *Estado Novo* (New State) and closed parliament, all political parties, and other institutions. The *Frente Negra* was shut down because, in Vargas' mind, black social and educational movements were promoting class conflict. The black movement lost its principal voice when, in spite of Arlindo's efforts to keep *A Voz da Raça* going, the newspaper closed down. *O Clarim d'Alvorada* continued publishing, and in 1940 its editor Corrêia Leite spoke of the end of the black movement. After Vargas's decree, he said, black leaders began to see the futility of their struggle. As long as blacks promoted recreational activities, they had no problem with the government and, in their minds, this made racial solidarity seem unnecessary.

[Blacks are] without racial unity, illiterate, in 75 per cent of cases without legally constituted families credulous of their own destiny, keeping as flags the loud colours of the carnival costumes of the groups and as shields, the tambourine and the *cuíca*. . . . And the *negro*, what can we say? Only that he founded some societies with suggestive titles and programs full of pretty words that are 'gone with the wind.' Some, well intentioned, others just attempting to exploit the unlettered masses, putting their own interests over collective interests, creating politics from race. Instead of unifying and strengthening [the movement] it just fed prejudices, acted as a divisive instrument that brought the [movement] down in the eyes of whites. Poor Race! . . . incapable of adapting to the dynamic and progressive era we live in.²⁰¹

Corrêia's heartfelt statement reflects enormous frustration stemming from the failure of black leadership's long struggle for racial solidarity. Still, his reproach was misdirected. He blamed the black community for its own plight, but the developers of the campaign to create and sustain racial solidarity encountered far more fundamental reasons outside the black community for their failure.

²⁰⁰ *A Voz da Raça* 4-64, April 1937, 1

²⁰¹ Corrêia Leite, *cit.* In Páham Pinto, 331.

CONCLUSION: WE ARE BRAZILIAN.

Ideology should not be thought of as an extra or “biased” aspect of life which, once identified can be removed as “false,” but as a routine, everyday product of social relations and lived experience.²⁰²

Answers to the question of why black identity disappeared within the larger identity of *brasilidade* in the 1930s lie in the political ideology of the period. Before all political organizations were closed in 1937, *A Voz da Raça*, the largest of the black newspapers, shifted its focus on the development of black solidarity within the black community to the pressing need of black support for Vargas. He was the long-awaited leader whose call for national unity promised all Brazilians a better life. His tremendous popularity amongst the poor and his emphasis on one Brazilian identity meant that the black leadership’s call for racial solidarity was doomed. It is clear that there is a close relationship between the national acceptance of Freyre’s thesis of racial democracy and the abandonment of black perspectives of citizenship as expressed in the black press. Perhaps the most damaging aspect of racial democracy to non-whites has been its basic premise that racial prejudice was a foreign concept and not a Brazilian one. And the image of a national identity based on cordial social relations among all levels of society irregardless of racial and class origins has camouflaged the inequities of a hierarchical system that had evolved during slavery. Thus, racial democracy convinced most blacks that assimilation was their only avenue for social mobility.

Intellectuals and Ideology

Racial democracy was the product of a discourse of one identity, racial harmony, and shared traditions attributed to the work of intellectuals during the Vargas regime. During this period, writers and scholars from the elite class wrote extensively on the topic of national identity in an attempt to overcome the international stigma attached to their mixed-blood society. On the defensive, they sought to validate their nationality within a social system deeply rooted in a widespread system of slavery that

²⁰² Mary Poovey ctd. in Nancy Stepan, *Race, Gender and Nation* 196.

had been abolished only forty years earlier.²⁰³ Thus, it comes as no surprise that Gilberto Freyre's extensive exploration of four hundred years of life in the *Casa Grande* caught the imagination of his fellow elites. More significantly, its positive interpretations of miscegenation suited the ambitions of a powerful president who saw in Freyre's version of Brazilian racial and social relations an ideal foundation for the development of a unifying national identity.

It is not widely known that parallel to the work of elite intellectuals like Freyre, black intellectuals worked to create a positive national identity for their group. Their efforts culminated in the formation of a dynamic black movement in the 30s. Yet the racial solidarity they worked so hard to nurture never came to fruition. Arlindo Veiga dos Santos serves as an example of the difficulty of black leadership to achieve a balance between racial solidarity and national inclusion. Such a balance played no part in the national identity formula. The lack of success and subsequent marginalisation of black leadership resulted from the official adoption of a national identity of Brazilianness that denied separate racial identity. The work of these black intellectuals was neither recognized nor included in the making of a national identity.

Yet elite intellectuals were given a good deal of attention by Vargas. Were they simply "window dressing," or did writers like Freyre actually constitute an influence?²⁰⁴ There are no easy answers to this question, but it is clear that clues to understanding both the roles of elite intellectuals and the exclusion of black intellectuals lie entangled in the political environment of the thirties. During this period, a defining characteristic of the Vargas regime was its drive to create a homogeneous consciousness of nationhood as a basis of social and political life. Vargas mobilised nation-wide campaigns to generate a patriotic sense of national unity that would, he believed, result in the leveling of ethnic disparities. At the same time, he demonstrated little political will to carry out the radical restructuring of Brazilian society needed to foster social equality. Freyre offered a perspective of Brazilian society that fit both inclinations for his interpretation of the role of blacks and their masters was folkloric and static.

Other characteristics of the Vargas regime must be kept in mind. First, when Getúlio Vargas took power in 1930 his ideology emphasized "the predominance of the group over the individual, the union over the states, and national interests over international ones."²⁰⁵ The junior officers who had helped elect him were more interested in change than democracy, and wholeheartedly supported an authoritarian government capable of imposing reforms. Such militant supporters helped convert a

²⁰³ Ortiz, 138.

²⁰⁴ Borges, 139.

²⁰⁵ Bradford Burns, 348.

regional revolt in 1930 into a national movement. To achieve power they brought the urban middle class and proletariat into national politics and strengthened the role of the state in economic and social matters. In sum, they encouraged nationalism.²⁰⁶

Second, in November 1937 Vargas did away with democratic process and took on dictatorial powers. One month later he disbanded all political parties. After his *coup*, Vargas managed to maintain the goals of his 'populist' program and, at the same time, built enormous support amongst the masses. Bradford Burns calls Vargas the "master manipulator" of the increasingly complex nature of Brazilian society.²⁰⁷ Blacks, in particular, had been his greatest supporters from 1930 when they celebrated his victory over "that bunch of slaveholding families."²⁰⁸

A third important consideration centres on the force of Vargas' cultural policies after 1937.²⁰⁹ Vargas, according to Randall Johnson, used "coercion, orientation, and co-option to influence cultural producers." Black organizations were closing, newspapers folding, and political opportunities disappearing at the same time as black culture began to enter the mainstream of national culture. The incorporation of certain benign lower-class cultural values was part of Vargas' conception of one unifying Brazilian identity. He sponsored research into the folklore of Brazil; and Samba and Carnival, previously considered vulgar activities of blacks, came under the auspices of government organs of culture. Radio, in particular, played a decisive role in the diffusion to the farthest reaches of Brazil of an imagined national culture.²¹⁰

All Brazilians could adopt certain black cultural manifestations without guilt or shame, for writers like Gilberto Freyre were proclaiming the value of blacks in the formation of national cultural identity. Moreover, these writers were also declaring that racial prejudice was a foreign concept not a Brazilian one. Thales de Azevedo suggests that all the national writing of the period seemed directed at describing the Brazilian character as one of great cordiality, warmth, and tolerance. Azevedo contrasts

²⁰⁶ Bradford Burns, 349.

²⁰⁷ Burns, 356-357.

²⁰⁸ Correia Leite, 91.

²⁰⁹ His cultural policies can be classified as hegemonic following Winant's Gramscian definition of hegemony as a "system in which politics operate largely through the incorporation of oppositional currents in the prevailing system of rule, and culture operates largely through the re-interpretation of oppositional discourse in the prevailing framework of social expression, representation, and debate." Winant, *Racial Conditions* 29.

²¹⁰ Randall Johnson, 320. This continued in the post-Vargas and second Vargas eras when there was a mobilization of intellectuals all over Brazil between 1947-1964 which was coordinated by the National Commission of Folklore and the Ministry of External Relations with the goal of defining national identity. Luis Rudolfo de Paixao Vilhena, "Projeto e Missao: O Movimento Folclórico Brasileiro 1947-1964, diss., Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ, 1995.

this proclaimed conviviality and flexibility with the contradictory reality of a hierarchical system. Within such a contradiction, Brazilian elites could define their society as tolerant while they ignored the need to address structural modifications that would have fostered true social equality.²¹¹ They did this with the help of intellectuals like Freyre who provided them with folkloric interpretations of Brazilian society that did not require or recommend social adjustment or investment. Thus, elites could avoid implementing programs like mass education and equal hiring practices that would have given poverty-stricken blacks the opportunity to participate as full citizens in Brazilian society.

Furthermore, Freyre's timely thesis of racial democracy seemed an ideal model for the tailoring of a national identity to fit the needs of a mixed-race society.²¹² His history of the Brazilian family brought blacks into definitions of national culture in a seemingly positive manner. Contrary to previous generations of writers, Freyre praised miscegenation for breaking down the barriers among the races to produce a vibrant new people of the tropics. The emergence of this race naturally precluded the recognition of separate racial identity. Miscegenation in the form of sex between white elite men and black subordinated women was truly the focus of Freyre's attention. He believed the real reason for harmonious social relations between domestic slaves and their masters—hence, among all Brazilians—was to be found in their sexual liaisons. Freyre described such unions with intimate detail, but barely mentioned the slaves who were not sharing their masters' hammocks. His interest lay in the *negras* and *mulatas* who had "white hearts." These were the predominately female servants, lovers, and playmates from times of slavery that inhabited his family history and the history of his social class.

Although Freyre praised the miscegenation that had occurred during slavery, he did not distance himself far enough from the scientific racist theories that had dominated Brazilian intellectual thought from before the turn of the century. He is justifiably credited with reversing its condemnation of mixed-race societies, but he remained an admirer of eugenics. His support for eugenic ideas was inherently tied to his belief that European models of behaviour and appearance were superior and would eventually dominate in any racial cross. Yet, he declared he had learned the truth about racial equality and cultural relativity from Franz Boas. It seems he was not able to move beyond the boundaries of his social class; he wrote of a democracy, but never questioned the dominance of the tiny

²¹¹ Thales de Azevedo, "Variações sobre o 'caráter nacional' brasileiro," *Os Brasileiros: Estudos de Caráter Nacional*, (Salvador:UFBa/CED, 1981) 55.

²¹² It is noteworthy that during the 1940s Venezuelan writers seeking to rationalize their own mixed-race society used Freyre's thesis as a model. Winthrop Wright, "The Todd Duncan Affair: Acción Democrática and the Myth of Racial Democracy in Venezuela," *The Americas* 44:1 (1987): 442.

Europeanised elite to which he belonged. They were the masters, he believed, and were destined to guide the masses.

Searching for identity

The “masses and the masters” were both involved in searches for new identities in a rapidly industrialising society that had not dismantled the social structures of slavery. Blacks had to define black identity outside the confines of slavery. White or whitened elites also had to define their identity in a new social and economic system. Unlike slavery, capitalism did not guarantee that they would be able to maintain the virtually uncontested dominance they had enjoyed for centuries. It is in this dual context that Freyre’s thesis that Brazil was a racial democracy emerged and gained momentum; and it was with the support of both elite and non-elite groups that racial democracy became the mythic cornerstone of Brazilian identity.

There can be no doubt that adopting a mixed-race identity for Brazil during a period of growing nationalism and potential social conflict was expedient for the elite. It is, however, much more difficult to comprehend black support for a version of the past many knew to be deeply flawed and a version of the present that, paraphrasing Renato Ortiz, was superimposed on social reality.²¹³ It is clear that there were three important factors underpinning black support for racial democracy: unwavering support for Vargas, the reluctance of white society to deal with black equality, and the absolute destitution of the black community. Nonetheless, do these circumstances explain black acceptance of racial democracy with its message of one identity? The black community had leaders who possessed a strong sense of distinct racial identity in contrast to Freyre’s concept of one identity evolving through centuries of miscegenation. It is evident that these leaders were painfully aware of the daily reality of racial prejudice and discrimination, and believed that only racial solidarity would change this. Their major difficulty, however, lay in the transmission of such racial solidarity and awareness of racial injustice to the impoverished people of the black community. Although reaching the people became easier as blacks became more politicized during the first decade of the Vargas regime, blacks became the greatest supporters of this president who championed the working class. Factionalism within the black movement caused many blacks to place their trust in Vargas to change their lives for the better. It truly seemed a new era had dawned for Brazil and, besides, blacks were actually included in national ideology.

Alongside growing nationalism came increasing authoritarianism and, in 1937, Vargas declared his dictatorial New Republic and prohibited all political opposition. Between 1937 and 1945, black

²¹³ Ortiz, 138.

organizations and newspapers are not evident in public. At the same time, repressive government measures forced the practice of African religions underground. So, we see the black community losing its public identity as a distinct group in Brazilian society as racial democracy gained public acclaim as the only possible Brazilian identity. Officially, the notion of separate racial identity became fixed as an unacceptable and “unBrazilian” idea. Thus, a powerful national argument began to draw in all segments of the population, and the mainstream view increasingly became one in which racial co-operation equaled racial absorption and co-option. In simpler terms, as miscegenation bleached the population, it supposedly would guarantee continued racial harmony in a Brazilian culture that recognized its African roots.

Arlindo Veiga dos Santos declared the adherence of blacks to the nationalist cause. “We are working on a policy,” he said, “to help national powers to be national... We, patriotic *negros* are jealously nationalist and we do not have any type of alliance with foreign *negros*.”²¹⁴ In this nationalistic climate, comparisons between Brazilian racial accommodation and North American racial segregation showed the racial situation in the United States as a sombre example of the extremes that all Brazilians wanted to avoid. Within this context, it is not surprising that the miscegenation being advocated by non-black writers, artists, and government officials seemed a legitimate survival mechanism to many in leadership positions in the black community.

There were obvious benefits for those few who could achieve some mobility, and these then served as examples for the rest. They were the special blacks—blacks of white soul, the blacks who were “the friends of the master.” Any access whatsoever to social mobility was an attractive enough option to make many *negros* and *mulatos* willing to accept the unspoken cost of admission—denying that racial prejudice existed in Brazil. Race became a taboo subject. The embracing of racial democracy as national doctrine caused overt racial prejudice to become socially unacceptable in the public arena. In its place a subtle form of discrimination evolved that hides behind class distinctions. *Pobre* (poor) replaced *negro* in expressions of fear and distaste heard in public. Even if subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination were recognized by some *negros* and *mulatos*, it was not socially acceptable to question them. Besides, to get ahead they had to act white or else be branded as troublemakers. For society in general, the social ascension of these “blacks of white soul” proved the truth of the myth: racial prejudice did not block social mobility for blacks in Brazil.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ *Voz da Raça* 1.2, March 1933, 1.

²¹⁵ Viotti da Costa, 241.

How could blacks develop a sense of identity as a group when their society, as a whole, denied prejudice, believed in the “whitening” process, had identified the mulatto as a special category, and accepted individual blacks and mulattos among the ranks of the white elite? The blocking of the formation of black identity is but one aspect of the enormous power of Freyre’s thesis of racial democracy. It also encouraged the folklorization of Brazilian identity in general and, worst of all, froze the image of black Brazilians in a static frame constructed during four hundred years of slavery. And finally we must ask, if Freyre’s construction of Brazilian identity had included the need to address ongoing social inequity, would the course of twentieth-century Brazilian history have changed dramatically? There can be no doubt that the thesis of racial democracy undermined and co-opted earlier black intellectuals’ efforts to create a cohesive black community voice, a voice that might have greatly contributed to the growth of a more equitable and stable nation.

EPILOGUE

You white Brazilians owe your fame of tolerance to our passivity...if American whites had to live with blacks like us, they would live the way we do.²¹⁶

It is paradoxical that as black culture became Brazilian culture, blacks became poorer and even further removed from access to social mobility and political representation. Today, blacks and whites are kings and queens during Carnival, stars of soccer matches, composers of *samba* and *pagode*, yet are rarely found as equals in Congress, government ministries, the diplomatic corps or high-society cocktail parties. Only recently have elites begun to hesitantly acknowledge obvious links between the image of racial democracy, race, inequality and abject poverty in Brazil. When asked, “why the darker the Brazilian, the fewer the chances of social mobility?”, they tend to continue to answer, “it is a class issue not a racial one.” It is telling that before the 1990s many non-whites have given similar answers. And these answers add to the confusing mix of race, class, myth and reality that challenges the researcher of Brazilian national identity and social relations.

As I established in Chapter Three, the notion that racial prejudice was insignificant in Brazil should have died a natural death after the fifties. In September, 1950, the first *Congresso do Negro Brasileiro* actually organised by blacks was held in Rio. It presented many of the same types of cultural discussions on music, art, culinary contributions and architectural design but, in contrast to the strictly folkloric aspect of previous congresses, blacks emphasized their own agency in the formation of Brazilian society. They also made a declaration calling for structural change that would end racial discrimination in Brazil.²¹⁷ A nation still celebrating mixed-race *brasilidade* paid no attention, as Brazilians in general believed there was little or no racial discrimination in Brazil. Brazilians, Florestan Fernandes has said, have the worst prejudice of all—the prejudice of not having prejudice. Generations of whites and blacks have repeated Freyre’s message: discrimination is so rare as to be insignificant and any incident that occurs probably stems from class distinctions.²¹⁸

Objective studies that might have overturned this stereotypical imagery were stymied by Freyre as the enormous prestige he enjoyed brought rewards to those who wrote in support of his thesis.

²¹⁶ *Voz da Raça* 1.27, 1933, 4.

²¹⁷ 1 Congresso do Negro Brasileiro, photocopy of proceedings and poster of convocation. No other data available.

²¹⁸ Viotti da Costa, 241.

Those who criticized it found themselves marginalized.²¹⁹ After 1964, his influence continued as it had begun: with the support of a dictatorial regime that would not permit open discussion of racial affairs. The junta decreed public discussion of racial issues subversive and forced Professors Fernandes and Ianni—both influential writers critical of the racial democracy thesis—to retire in 1969 from their positions at the University of São Paulo. Sérgio Buarque de Holanda resigned his professorship at USP in protest and others like sociologist and critic of Brazilian social structure Fernando Henrique Cardoso, current president of Brazil, went into exile. Many intellectuals who stayed were *cassados*—deprived of political rights—if they did not toe the official line.²²⁰ In the early eighties, the regime gradually began to release its iron grip on society, and Brazilian writers threw themselves into writing about hitherto forbidden topics. Books began to appear on every aspect of the lives of blacks in Brazil, past and present: statistical information, more reliable sources on black agency during slavery, studies on the development of the black movement in the first and last decades of the century and testimonial accounts of black experience in Brazil.

Research into racial democracy drew on the earlier UNESCO studies and the work of Florestan Fernandes and others who had been muzzled by the regime. Their conclusions were that the mythical nature of Freyre's thesis of racial equality had kept non-white masses in their place and preserved the status-quo of the rich minority since the 1930s. Evidence to back such conclusions came from statistical data that showed unmistakable indices of increasing poverty in the overwhelmingly *negro* and *mulato* majority, a diminishing middle class of *brancos*, *mulatos* and a few *negros*, and an ever higher concentration of wealth in the small *branco* elite. Only with the end of the dictatorship in 1986 and the death of Freyre one year later, was critical examination of Freyre's work openly debated. Once freed from censorship and the need to respect Freyre's stature as a national hero, social scientists in particular searched for links between the perpetuation of inequality and Freyre's thesis that race was not a significant issue in social relations and economic distribution.

This time, black voices are included in the discussion. For example, the leadership of Ilê Aiyê, a black organisation in Salvador, Bahia, argues that the path to equality is to be found in the "reafrikanization" of young *negros*, a process they call "*blackitude bahiana*." For more than twenty years, they have been working to increase self-esteem among the young by teaching them to take pride in themselves and in the decisive role blacks played in the building of Brazil. In 1975, the first *afro-bloc*

²¹⁹ Luis Costa Lima, prologue, Benzaquem de Araújo, 8.

²²⁰ Viotti, 246. Darcy Ribeiro tells of 44 professors forced to retire in one month only: April, 1969. Many more social scientists were not permitted to receive their final degrees or be contracted as teachers or researchers. Investment in education dropped from 11.2% to 5.4% of the national budget and moves were made to eliminate the teaching of social sciences. Darcy Ribeiro *Aos Trancos e Barrancos*, (Section 1985) n.p.

paraded in the streets of Salvador during carnival. They had “strange hair and clothes” and sang: “*Que bloco é esse que eu quero saber? É o mundo negro que vamos mostrar pra você.*” “Who are we?” they asked. “It is the black world that we are going to show you.”²²¹ Freyre, of course, was highly critical of this group which he called racist. Jorge Amado, writer and long-time friend of Freyre’s, sees all racial protest as “the aberrant behaviour of an insignificant number of Brazilian mulattos, some lighter, some darker, who want to be American blacks and preferably rich American blacks.”²²²

One of the mainstays of racial democracy was its reliance on the image of hostile race relations in the United States. Segregation, lynching, race riots and race hatred were not an integral part of Brazilian race relations, and Brazilians could legitimately feel their racial accommodation was superior. When the American Civil Rights movement of the sixties swept away discriminatory laws and started a process of integration in the United States, it seemed to Brazilian observers that Americans were simply beginning to catch up with Brazilian standards of race relations. However, a new generation of young African-American scholars began to base their evaluations of Brazilian racial attitudes on changing race relations in the United States. Such a shift can be seen in the thinking of historian Leslie Rout. He first went to Brazil in 1962 as a jazz musician invited to participate in a seven-month tour of colleges and universities. His expectations were initially naïve. “If you’re like me,” he said, “you’ve probably read Gilberto Freyre or Frank Tannenbaum, or watched a couple of CBS reports, paged through *Holiday* or some comparable journal. Perhaps you have talked to a Brazilian or two.”²²³ As a result, for Rout Brazil beckoned as a kind of tropical Shangri-La. “No racial problems exist in Brazil,” he declared and “in today’s United States of America, where racial troubles can no longer be swept under the carpet, the Brazilian legend exercises a peculiar influence.”²²⁴

Later, realization that Brazil was no promised land for American blacks replaced Rout’s original hope of finding a society in which he would want to live. After a second visit in 1965, Rout concluded that the American system of segregation, in spite of its residual evils, had fostered the development of racial consciousness. In the U.S. light skin did not translate into privilege or social mobility, and this

²²¹ The song went on “*Branco, se você soubesse o valor que preto tem, tu tomava banho de pixe, ficava preto também.*” *Whitey, if you knew the value of being black, you’d take a bath in pitch and get black too.*

²²² Ubirajara Damaceno de Motta, “Jornegro: um projeto da comunicação afro-brasileiro,” *Revista de Cultura Vozes* Petrópolis 82.1 (1988): 48-9. Clóvis Moura, *Sociologia do Negro Brasileiro* 204-5. Jorge Amado quoted in a special insert on racism and racial awareness: “O país repensa o mito de democracia racial,” *O Estado de São Paulo* 18 December 1994, Caderno 21D. The American black movement would provide inspiration for Brazilian blacks in the early seventies. Young musicians in poor urban neighbourhoods continue to use Afro-American music as a vehicle for racial protest. Such cultural hybridization of racial protest has acted as a catalyst for the resurgence of the black movement in Brazil.

²²³ Leslie B. Rout, “Brazil: Study in Black, Brown and Beige,” Hellwig, *African-American Reflections*, 182-3.

²²⁴ Rout, 183.

resulted in a racial unity that did not exist in Brazil. This one factor, he felt, canceled out any notion that Brazil represented a model for African-Americans in their struggle to overcome discrimination.²²⁵

A combination of civil rights legislation, affirmative action, and militancy has created enormous differences between the role of blacks in the United States and blacks in Brazil. This time the comparison is not in Brazil's favour. Racial hostility may still be more obvious in the U.S. than in Brazil; however, in economic terms many African-Americans have experienced unprecedented mobility. According to the 1992 census, blacks, 12.3% of the American population, were moving into middle and upper classes in significant numbers: 44.3 % of blacks were classified as middle class while 11% earned between \$50,000 and \$75,000 per year. In 1991, 12% of blacks (22% of whites) were enrolled in American colleges and universities in contrast to 1% (whites 5%) in 1940.²²⁶ These data obviously cannot be compared with the dismal educational and economic prospects of Brazilian blacks who are three times less likely than whites to have any access to schooling at any level and consistently earn less than whites.²²⁷

Similar disparity is found in the media world of advertising and television. Brazilian tourist agencies promote images of *brownness* and *blackness* to the outside world—tanned bodies displayed on golden beaches, black bodies dancing in Carnival groups. Yet, commercial advertising and the media within the country use stereotypical images of *whiteness* to sell their products and programs to targeted upper-class and middle-class consumers. Despite recent awkward attempts to portray blacks as role models outside the world of sports, images of blacks on television continue to be linked to sexuality, crime, poverty and servility.²²⁸

Black activists insist that this ambiguity stands in the way of black social ascension which they predict will occur only when Brazilians of African ancestry “turn themselves black.” According to psychologist Neusa Santos Souza, simply being black is not a given in Brazil; it is something that must be achieved. “Being born with black skin, having negroid characteristics, and sharing the same history

²²⁵ Rout, 194-7.

²²⁶ Graham Fraser, “Black But Not Too Black,” *The Globe and Mail* January 22 1994 D5. Fraser cautions that these positive statistics must be analysed in conjunction with worsening conditions for poor blacks. His article is about middle and upper class blacks “acting too black” for the “comfort” of whites.

²²⁷ Hasenbalg, *Relações* 80-100.

²²⁸ A prime-time *novela* shown in 1995 attempted to deal with racism. The local press declared it a turning point in Brazilian racial attitudes; it was, however, highly criticised by black groups in São Paulo. They pointed out that the young mulatto in focus was not able to face the racist incident highlighted in the program, but had to be helped by his white friends—a familiar scenario in the history of Brazilian race relations.

of uprootedness, slavery and racial discrimination does not alone result in a black identity,” she says.²²⁹ Santos Souza further believes that many blacks become caricatures of whites and miscegenation is often a search for whiter children, closer to the ideal. Blacks are “imprisoned in an ‘alienating image’ of black identity that they did not create.” She places the blame for this lack of identity firmly on “the myth of racial democracy that has caused a good part of the black masses to spend their entire lives attempting to reach an ideal: to be white.”²²⁵⁰

²²⁹ For an in-depth discussion of the psychology of *whitening* amongst blacks in Brazil see Neusa Santos Souza, Tornar-se Negro ou As Vicissitudes da Identidade do Negro Brasileiro em Ascensão Social (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Graal, 1983) 77.

²³⁰ de Motta, Jornegro 55.

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