

BRAZIL TRIP-LaCuir D. Yancey

In 2012, Lacour D. Yancey received a \$500 travel award to help facilitate a short stay in Bahia, Brazil to immerse himself in Capoeira. In response to the questions I posed, he replied:



When did you go? I entered Brazil on October 17, 2012 and returned to the US on the second of November.

Where did you go? I went to Salvador Bahia, Brazil.

Why did you go? I wanted to study and experience Capoeira Angola from its roots of origin and from some of our FICA leaders in Brazil.

How did you spend your time? I spent my days training capoeira in regular daily sessions and sometimes twice a day (mostly) at FICA Bahia. I also spent some evenings visiting different open rodas led by other Mestres such as: Mestre Boca Rica, Mestre Lua Rasta, Mestre Marcelo, and Mestre Moraes. These rodas were held in different areas in Bahia, namely: the GCAP roda at *Forte do Santo Antonio*, the famous Roda led by Mestre Boca Rica that was also in the Forte Do Santo Antonio; Roda Pira Vermelha; Roda do Terredo; and of course the Roda da FICA - Bahia.

In my spare time, I visited some of the more historical places such as the Igreja do Bonfim, the Museu do Carmo, and the Afro-Brazilian Museum of History. I also visited local outdoor food markets, and the famous Mercado Modelo market that's held every Saturday inside and outside. I also did some shopping for capoeira shoes on Rua dos Sapato. Moreover, I purchased a very good pandeiro (tambourine) from Mestre Lua Rasta's wood working and capoeira instruments shop near the Praça da Se.

Who did you meet? Upon arrival I was picked up by Aloan, the son of M. Valmir and he was a great help in securing a place for me to stay at the home of Dona Marcia. Here I met Eduardo, another capoeirista training at FICA Bahia who showed me around the area and helped me to get to and from the FICA gym. I also met Mestre Valmir's younger son, Dija, who ended up leading several of the classes until the Mestre returned from a trip to Costa Rica. I was also introduced to Mestre Boca Rica by Eduardo one day, on our way to train for my first time in the afternoon class lead by T. Dija.

What did you accomplish? I spent about 2 ½ weeks in Salvador, Bahia and I accomplished a number of things. Though, in that short amount of time, I could not see everything there that I could have. What I did see, however, was much more than expected! First of all, since I was immersed in a Portuguese speaking culture, I improved my ability to understand the language and was even able to communicate in conversational Portuguese, something that for several years has been very challenging for me. Near the end of my stay, I felt much more confident navigating through the city, communicating with vendors and community members, Mestres, and fellow students alike.

Moreover, I experienced traveling on my own in a different country and improved my self-reliance and self-confidence, allowing me to apply this new self-awareness to my professional life, home life and relationships when I returned to the US. I also felt encouraged to slow down, take in the natural surroundings, and really appreciate each moment.

As far as Capoeira, I played with very skilled capoeiristas who challenged the edges of my game and assisted me greatly in the development of various skills that could only be brought about by playing with mestres, contramestres and gifted trainees. My passion for the game was reignited and since the majority of the players were of African decent I felt a different kind of camaraderie and connection that I was unable to feel in the United States. The music, alone, was rich with feeling, history, passion, the struggle, and solidarity. Feeling deeply connected to the roots of the game, I felt humbled, inspired, and challenged and all of these things I brought back to share with the youth, the Madison FICA group, and my family.