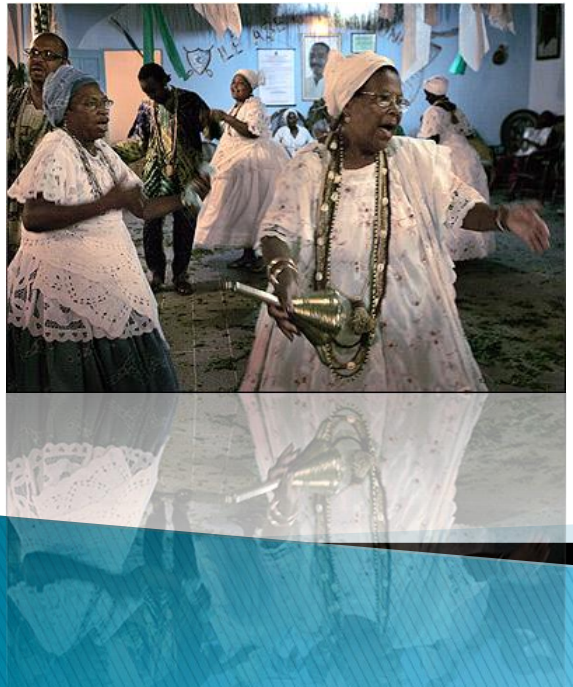
Afro-Brazilians and the Continuing Struggle for Racial Equlity



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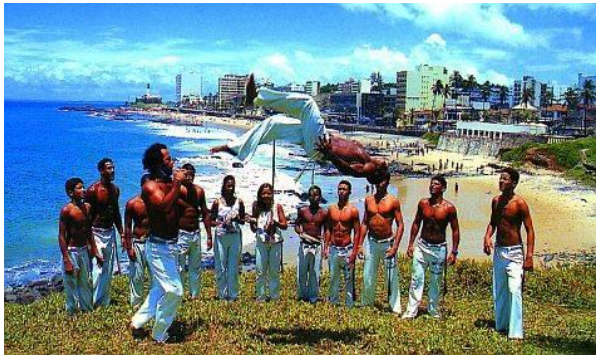
Brazil and Blackness

- Transnational and comparative anti-racism is evolving as a field of study but also as a political initiative
- The United Nations, European Union, and other inter-governmental bodies have addressed the issue
- A unique experiment is the U.S. Brazil Joint Action Plan for the Elimination of Racism (JAPER) involving both governments and civil society

Brazil and Blackness

- Outline of Presentation
  - Rise of Brazil as a global power
  - History of Black Resistance in Brazil
  - Status of Afro-Brazilians
  - Lula, Post-Lula and Black Brazil



Brazil's Rise as a Global Power

- Charles de Gaulle once said, "Brazil is the country of the future – and always will be."

- The future has arrived
- Brazil is:
  - World's eight largest economy
  - World's biggest exporter of raw materials in steel, iron ore, gold, grains, and energy
  - Future host of the World Cup and Olympics
  - One of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) nations seen as the next generation of global leaders

Brazil's Rise as a Global Power

- My argument:
  - Brazil's full realization of its potential will be determined by the degree it effectively addresses issues of racial disparities and discrimination

- Three necessary steps
  - Genuine inclusion in the nation's economic, social, and political institutions
  - Targeted policies to resolve social and economic disparities
  - Local, national and international collaboration focused on the appropriation of "best practices"

Will all Brazilians go along for the ride?

History of Black Resistance

- About 30-40 percent of all Africans taken from Africa were sent to Brazil (4-4.5 million)
- Quilombos – communities of escapees – led the resistance against Portuguese slavery
- On May 13, 1888, Brazil became the last country in the Western hemisphere to officially end slavery

History of Black Resistance

- **Post-slavery response different in Brazil and U.S.**
  - Economic supports missing in Brazil vs. land grants and Freedmen's Bureau in U.S.
  - Educational opportunities lacking vs. creation of thousands of schools including universities
  - Lack of political inclusion vs. hundreds of elected officials including Congressmembers

Forty acres and a mule

History of Black Resistance

- An early effort to “whiten” the country by bringing in white European labor and the discourse against miscegenation failed
- In reaction, sociologist Gilberto Freyre, in the 1930s, argued that Brazil was a “racial democracy”
- Afro-Brazilians challenged the idea of “racial democracy” as untrue but it remained a dominant paradigm for decades

History of Black Resistance

- Authoritarian regimes consistently repressed black political organizing arguing that racial mobilization was subversive and harmful to the nation
- President Getulio Vargas (1930-1945) outlawed black organizations
- The 1964 military coup, supported by the U.S., ended black political organizing for 25 years

History of Black Resistance

- Many efforts by Black activists:
  - Black Experimental Theater 1944
  - National Convention of Brazilian Blacks 1946
  - Afro-Brazilian Democratic Convention 1946
  - 1st Congress of Brazilian Blacks 1950
  - United Black Movement 1980s
  - Participation in WCAR 2001

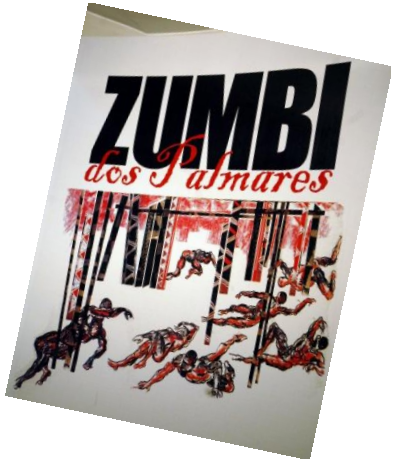
History of Black Resistance

- In the 1980s, when democracy returned, the United Black Movement was organized
- It became the key national black organization demanding equality and justice while hundreds of other local groups were created
- Afro-Brazilians became central in a number of regional anti-racism efforts
- Brazilian Black and indigenous were major participants at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism

Impact of Black Activism

- Afro-Brazilians have also produced their own media
  - *Raca* and *Afrimativa* magazines

- Their own university
  - Zumbi dos Palmares in Sao Paulo



- Their own museum
  - Museu Afrobrasil in Sao Paulo

Impact of Black Activism

- In 2000 Brazil passed a national affirmative action law aimed at higher education
- In November 2005 Brazil's first black television channel was launched
  - TV da Gente, which means “our TV” or “people’s TV”
  - Lasted only about a year

Demographics and Status of Afro-Brazilians

The Black Population

- Race identity problematic
- Black and Brown Brazilians are half of the nation's 192 million
  - In 1890, blacks were 56%
  - In 1940, blacks were 36%
  - In 2010, blacks are 50%
- Second-largest black population after Nigeria

Brazil Census History

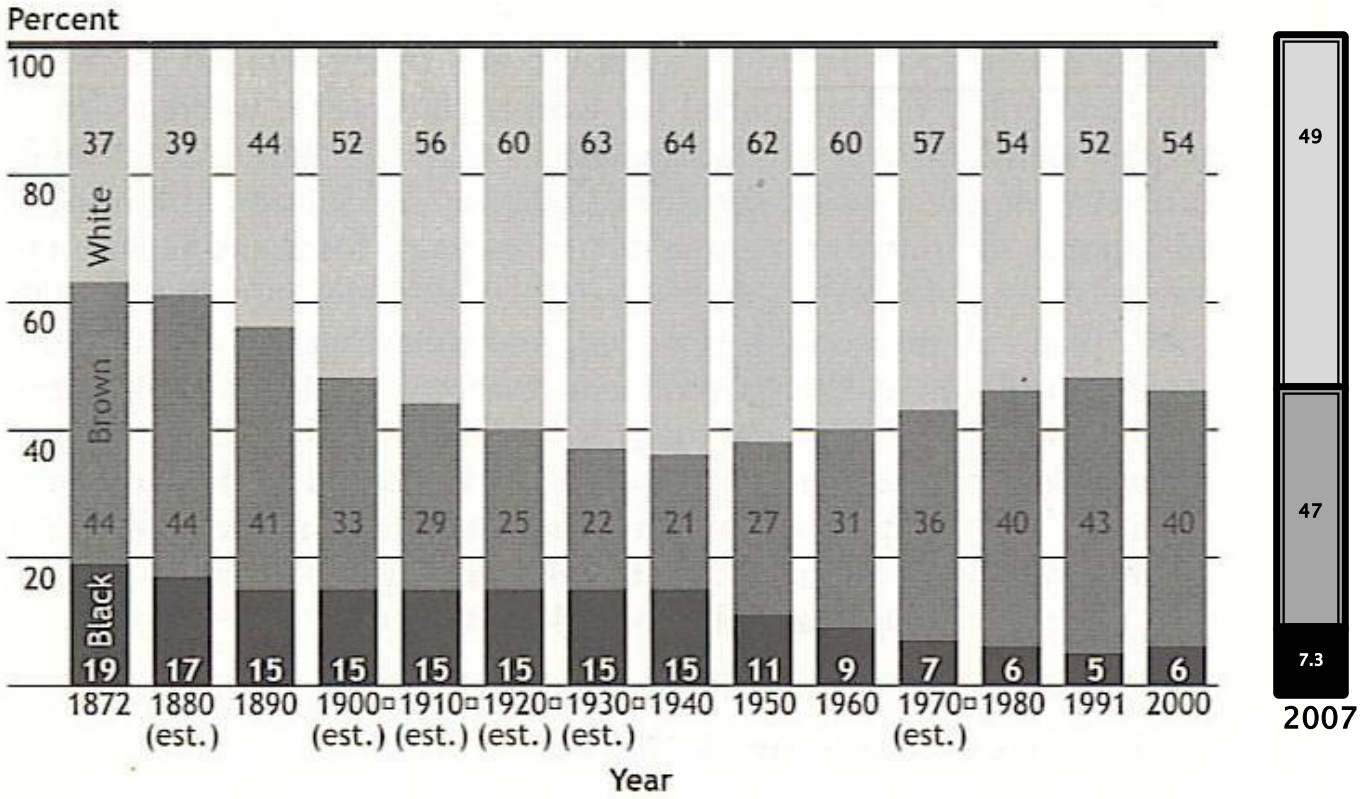
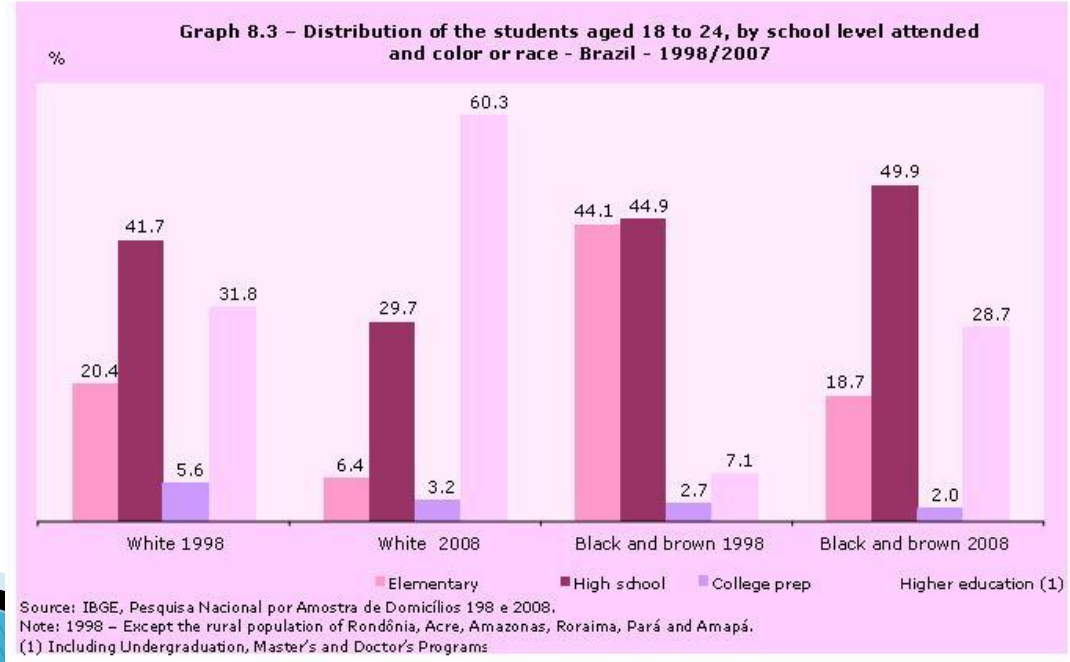


FIGURE 2.1 Racial composition: Brazil, 1872–2000. (1872, 1890, 1940, 1950, 1960, 1980, 1991, and 2000 censuses of Brazil. Based on estimates (est.) for remaining years.)

Status of Black Brazilians

Education	Black	White
Yrs of schooling completed	4.2	6.2
% with no formal education	36%	19%
% of adult illiterates	50%	20%



Status of Black Brazilians

Health	Black	White
Infant mortality	62.3	37.3%

Table 1.4 – Total fertility, gross birth rate, gross mortality rate, infant mortality and life expectancy at birth, by sex, by Major Regions - 2008

Major Regions and Federative Units	Total fertility	Gross birth rate (‰)	Gross mortality rate (‰)	Infant mortality rate (‰)	Life expectancy at birth		
					Total	Men	Women
Brazil	**1.89**	**16.15**	**6.22**	**23.59**	**73.0**	**69.3**	**76.8**
North	**2.37**	**20.51**	**4.87**	**24.20**	**71.9**	**69.1**	**74.9**
Northeast	**2.12**	**19.33**	**6.61**	**34.40**	**70.1**	**66.5**	**73.8**
Southeast	**1.63**	**14.21**	**6.41**	**17.10**	**74.3**	**70.4**	**78.5**
South	**1.88**	**12.77**	**6.17**	**15.60**	**75.0**	**71.6**	**78.5**
Central West	**1.91**	**16.83**	**5.27**	**18.30**	**74.0**	**70.6**	**77.5**

Status of Black Brazilians – Economically

- Brazilian blacks earn an average of 51.4% of whites
  - However, from 2003 to 2009, the salaries of white workers rose 15.3%, while the salaries of black and mixed-race workers increased 22.3%
- The income gap between whites and blacks is wider than in apartheid-era South Africa

Status of Black Brazilians – Economically

- The average monthly income in Brazil is:
  - $358(US) for white men
  - $239(US) for white women
  - $172(US) for black men
  - $121(US) for black women

- A survey of Brazil's 500 largest businesses found that only 1.8 percent of the managers were black

Status of Black Brazilians – Criminal Justice

- Rio police killed more than 1,000 young mostly black people a year

- Amnesty International identified five categories of police violence:
  - Massive raids into favelas (shantytowns)
  - Inappropriate use of deadly force
  - Extrajudicial executions
  - Vendetta killings by off-duty police officers
  - Disappearances from official custody

Lula and Black Brazil

Lula and Black Brazil

- The 2002 election of Pres. Luiz Inacio “Lula” da Silva represented a turning point (of sorts) in the relationship between the government and the black community
  - Appointment of singer Gilberto Gil as Minister of Culture
  - Creation of SEPPIR, (Special Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality) on March 21, 2003

Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial

BRASIL
UM PAÍS DE TODOS
GOVERNO FEDERAL

Lula and Black Brazil

- Establishment of *Bolsa Familia* , a program that gives small subsidies to millions of poor Brazilians to buy food and other essentials
  - Benefits 45 million people
  - More effective at raising per-capita incomes than increases in the minimum wage, which has risen 36 percent since 2003
- The number of people under the poverty line — defined as those earning less than $80 a month — fell by 32 percent from 2004 to 2006

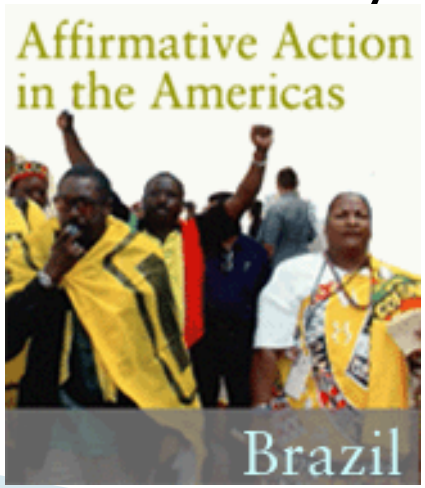
Lula and Black Brazil: Affirmative Action in University Admission

- Quotas instituted in state universities
  - Charges of "Reverse Discrimination"
  - Question raised of "Who is Black?"
- Initial Outcome
  - Increase in black attendance at the university level

A Pro-Quota Protest at a university in Brazil

The Race Statute

- In 1999, a Race Equality Statute was proposed in Congress under pressure from the black movement
  - Essentially a Civil Rights bill
- Black activists were key in pushing Congress to address the issue legislatively
- After substantial changes, it was passed Congress and signed into law by President Lula in July 2010



Obama and Black Brazil

The Brazilian Obamas

- Obama's rise sent both political and racial messages – and raised numerous questions
  - How did African Americans who are only 12% of the population produce a president?
  - Can Brazil which is 50% black do the same?
  - Are American whites no longer racist?

- In 2008, eight candidates ran for elected office under the name Obama
  - The Obamas represented a wide range of parties, from the Workers Party to the Central-Democrats, and varying ideologies from socialist to evangelical

The Future of Race and Anti-Racism in Brazil

- Several factors shaping the future
  - New president who will have to address issues of class and racial gaps
  - The role and power of SEPPIR in the new administration
  - Growth and sophistication of Brazil's black civil society sector
  - Increased activism by blacks in the nation's formal political structures
  - Transnational alliances with anti-racist and human rights activist

Muito Obrigado!
(Thank you!)