

# Pretos (Blacks) and Mulatos (Mulattos) Among the Middle Classes

São Paulo, 1983-1984<sup>1</sup>

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Oracy Nogueira in a ceremony at Escola Livre de Sociologia e Política de São Paulo in the 1950s. He is the second from right to left. Fundo Oracy Nogueira, Casa de Oswaldo Cruz.

Explanatory Note: In an article published in *Folha de São Paulo* on November 6, 1983, Neusa Barbosa stated that negros [blacks]<sup>2</sup> accounted for less than 1% of graduate students at the University of São Paulo (USP) and at the Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC SP). Among the employees of these two universities, she said: “at the middle and upper levels, including among the teaching staff, there are hardly any black people at all.” It was this report that gave the author the idea of investigating, through participant observation, the presence of pretos [blacks]<sup>3</sup> and mulatos at events

1 Editor’s Note. Oracy Nogueira (1917-1996) wrote this text in 1985 and it remained unpublished until now. The originals are kept at the Oracy Nogueira Archives now held by Casa de Oswaldo Cruz/Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, in Rio de Janeiro. This editor, Maria Laura Viveiros de Castro Cavalcanti, who organized the Nogueira Archives, revised the text’s typed originals including additional footnotes indicated as Editor’s Notes. The paper was also adapted (with omissions always indicated) to fit the space available in this Journal.

2 Editor’s Note. Since the 1950s some researchers have aggregated two census categories—*pretos* (blacks) and *pardos* (browns)—into a single category. Some of them defined this category as *não-brancos* (non-whites), others as *peças de cor* (people of color), more recently, as *negros* (blacks). The reasoning was that the social characteristics of *pretos* e *pardos* were very similar in comparison with the whites, and that *negro* is also a category used by militants to classify all those who see themselves as black. Because of these specificities, we have maintained the original Portuguese terms in italics throughout this translation, with the exception of *brancos* (whites), where the meaning is more or less the same as in Britain or the US.

3 Editor’s Note: *Preto* (black) is a common sense term used to designate a person with very dark skin.

organized by the University of São Paulo, as well as at cultural and social events outside the University, which I attended for this purpose during a period of twelve months from December 1983 to November 1984.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The issue

The *Folha de São Paulo* published the above-mentioned article by Neusa Barbosa on November 6, 1983. It was entitled “At the university, *negros* don’t acknowledge the presence of racial discrimination.”

Briefly, the article affirmed that, in the University of São Paulo and in the capital’s Catholic University, out of a total of almost 50,000 undergraduate students, less than 500 were *negro*, according to data from militants of the University’s *movimento negro*.

As regards the employees at the two universities, the report continues: “... Although *negros* are rarely hired, it is clear that the vast majority of them work as servants, cleaners, waiters, drivers or, at best, as clerks. At the middle and higher levels, teaching staff included, *negros* and *mulatos* can hardly be found.”

The report also refers to the difficulties encountered by the *militantes negros* in their efforts to create awareness amongst their university colleagues of their condition of being *negro*. According to one of these militants, these colleagues not only resisted being identified as *negros*, but also accused the *movimento negro* of being snitchers.

Without disputing the precision of these numbers, nor considering whether it was appropriate to present the data from each of these universities separately, I have no doubt that they reflect, in the three segments that they cover – students, teachers and other employees – the already well-known structure of the Brazilian labour-force, in which, [...] whites occupy the more privileged positions and *negros* – *pretos* and *mulatos* – the less privileged, in terms of employment and the socio-economic structure in general.

This provided me with the motivation to undertake the present study, which consists of the systematic observation of the presence (or absence) of *pretos* and *mulatos* amongst teachers and students at the University of São Paulo.

As I did not wish to commit myself to develop a formal and systematic project, nor to request sponsorship from any institution, I ended up by limiting my research to the observation of the presence or absence of *pretos* and *mulatos*

in situations and events inside and outside the University of São Paulo, which I was supposed to attend as part of my professional and social activities. Those events were attended by people from the middle or upper social groups, who made up either the entire number or at least the vast majority of those present, with the exception of occasional occurrences, which could enrich this research.

I also decided to limit the observations to a period of one year, from December 1983 to November 1984. Now that this period is over I can admit that it was a year of an uncomfortable and self-assumed personal obsession, the end of which was accompanied by a great feeling of relief, as I was at last free from the systematic observation of the racial appearance of the people that surrounded me, an attitude which is by no means characteristic of race relations in Brazil, nor is it a part of our culture.

The main hypothesis was that *pretos* would be absent from the majority of the situations and events to be described, whereas *mulatos* would be always present, even though underrepresented in relation to their proportion in the Brazilian population as a whole.

## 1.2 Colour and social hierarchy in the past

With the discovery or, more appropriately put, the invasion of what is today Brazil's territory by the Portuguese, two ethnic groups, both physically and culturally different, confronted one another – white Europeans and Brazil's indigenous people.

As the whites began to impose their will on the various Indian peoples, they began to brand them as either 'wild' or 'savage' (those who lived in tribes), and 'domesticated' (those who had been baptised and acculturated).

Due to sexual contact between white men and Indian women a mixed group of people soon began to emerge.

Due to the Catholic Church's intervention, and above all to the Jesuits, the human character of the indigenous people was formally proclaimed, and soon their disguised exploitation began under the pretext of Christianising or civilising them.

The importation of Africans to work as slaves began even before the end of the 16th century, when the first sugar plantations were established.

There were approximately 5 million Indians at the time of the discovery. This number was soon to be drastically reduced by a combination of factors: wars, arduous labour, adverse living conditions and the infectious diseases

brought by the invaders. The number of *negros africanos* on the other hand, continued to increase significantly due to the flourishing slave trade.’

In the case of the *negros*, miscegenation soon began as a result of sexual contact between white males and female slaves. The shortage of white women was a significant motive for this contact between the male invaders and Indians and *negras* [black women], and contributed for our society’s attitude of indulgence towards *mestiços* [mestizos]. *Negros* who were born in Brazil, no matter if they were children of African couples or of mestizos were called *crioulo* [creoles], and this established a distinction between imported slaves, called “Africans”, and slaves born in the colony.

Soon after the first importation of African slaves, at the end of the 16th century, manumissions began, although the scale of these increased substantially only in the 18th century. As by law the children of freed slaves were also free, the population of African descent began gradually to include not only *pretos* and *pardos*<sup>4</sup> but also freed slaves, and *ingênuos* – *pretos e pardos* who had never been enslaved.

As long as slavery lasted, *africano* [African] and *preto* would be the paradigms or prototypes of the slave.

If, on the one hand, the greatest stigma was attached to the attributes *africano* and *preto*, due to their association with slavery, there was a certain reluctance, even repugnance, at maintaining *pardos* as slaves. Bernardo de Guimarães’ novel *A Escrava Isaura* is historically plausible, as Burlamaqui<sup>5</sup> illustrates (Apud Carneiro da Cunha 1984: 102)<sup>6</sup> and Verger (1968).

It was freed *africanos* [Africans] and *pretos*, who also suffered the regular legal restrictions on their freedom, both of movement and occupation, who

4 Editor’s Note: We decided to keep in Portuguese all the words, such as *pretos* [blacks], *negros* [blacks], *pardos* [whiter mulatos], as *moreno* [light mulatos/sun tanned] used by Nogueira that belong to the Brazilian racial classificatory system, such as understood by Nogueira. Cf. “Skin Color and Social Class” (Vibrant, vol. 5, n. 1. January/June 2008), his own translation of “Preconceito racial de marca e preconceito racial de origem. (...)”, originally published in 1954 (Nogueira, Oracy. *Tanto preto quanto branco. Estudo de relações raciais*. São Paulo: T. A. Queiroz, 1985). It must be noted however that when Nogueira refers to the slavery period the term *preto* has a different meaning. Only fugitive and rebel slaves were called *negro* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

5 Editor’s note: The reference is to Frederico L. C. Burlamaqui’s book *Memoria Analytica á cerca do commercio d’escravos e á cerca dos malles da escravidão domestica*. Rio de Janeiro: Typografia Commercial Fluminense, 1837. The novel *A escrava Isaura* [The slave Isaura], de Bernardo Guimarães, was published in the context of Brazilian Abolitionist Movement (1875). The heroine is a slave that has no African or black features – she has straight hair and an almost white skin, and is also very well educated – and who is pursued by the dissolute son of her mistress who becomes her master with his mother’s death. She is finally freed by her love, a young liberal white man who challenges all social and racial prejudices and marries her.

6 Editor’s note: Nogueira is quoting from Carneiro da Cunha’s post-doctoral thesis, whose bibliographic reference is maintained. The thesis was published in book form as *Negros estrangeiros; os escravos libertos e sua volta à África*, in 1985 by Editora Brasiliense (SP). A new edition appeared in 2012, revised and extended, published by the Companhia das Letras (SP).

were the most likely to be confused with slaves and ordered to prove their status as free men.

The degree of solidarity between slaves and freemen with African ascendancy was limited by a number of factors: the different levels of education between Africans and *crioulos*, as well as their different attitudes, and the differences between tribes that originated from different African nations or that belonged to different cultural traditions. On the other hand, among the factors that contributed to solidarity between the two groups were: kinship ties (enslaved parents who wanted freedom for their children, brothers who were free and wanted to obtain freedom for their siblings), as well as identification with the same tribal or ethnic ancestry.

However, different interests and forms of behaviour emerged among the slaves themselves, depending on whether they were rural or urban and their differing functions – plantation slaves, semiskilled slaves, *escravos de ganho* [slaves hired out], *escravos de aluguel* [slaves for hire], domestic slaves etc.

Liberty, either purchased or granted freely by slave-owners, was the utmost aspiration of any slave; manumission, as well as any other benefit that the slave might expect, depended entirely on the plans of his master. As manumission without payment generally depended on certain conditions, such as serving the master or his family for a certain amount of years, it may be considered as a form of indemnity, or of remuneration.

As Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (op.cit.: 21) points out, manumission was less probable “in areas and times of economic prosperity” and more common during times of economic depression.

Women, however, had a greater chance of achieving legal freedom than men; the *crioulos* a greater chance than the *africanos* [Africans]; the *pardos* a greater chance than the *pretos*. In the case of women there were a number of reasons for this: they were less essential to the slave-based economy; frequently they were their master’s concubines; cultural or family reasons (in the case of bastard children, for example), and paternalism on the part of the slave owners.

Carneiro da Cunha also affirms that the African was always *preto*, whereas the *crioulo* could be either *preto* or *pardo*, and the *pardo* was necessarily a *crioulo* [creole]. Thus, although the correlation between colour and legal and social condition was not entirely linear, it is nevertheless true that

the combination of colour and condition was fundamental in the hierarchical structure, which went from the most privileged to the least privileged: rich whites, poor whites, freed *pardos*, freed Africans, slave *pardos*, *pretos*, African slaves.

At one extreme were the rich whites, the plantation owner or his equivalent; at the other the African slaves. The African slave, *preto* and a cultural stranger, was at the same time the most despised and the most feared by the members of the dominant class. Manumission could modify the form of individual subjugation, but, in general, and particularly in the case of the so called *manumissão* “*gratuita*” [“free” manumission], this by no means exempted the ex-slave from dependence on his former owner, or on his family and social class. The ex-slave was expected to continue to serve and show deference to his/her ex-owner. ‘Ingratitude’ could be punished by revoking freedom.

Furthermore, the *pretos* or *pardos*, who had been freed or born free, were more likely to be subject to drastic or violent punishment than a slave, as their punishment did not damage the property of a given slave owner. As an example Carneiro da Cunha quotes what happened to those who revolted in the so-called *revolução dos alfaiates* [the tailors’ revolution] in 1798, in Bahia:

“Two freemen [that is, born free], and two who had been [recently] freed, all *pardos*, were hanged; then three of their corpses were cut into pieces and displayed in the public square. The other freed slaves were abandoned on the coast of Africa. The owners of the slaves who had been involved were forced to sell them. None of the white conspirers, radical intellectuals who belonged to the upper classes, were condemned. The government looked the other way while the civilian leader of the revolt escaped, and a plantation owner who had been deeply involved in the plot managed not to be caught by marrying the Governor’s secretary’s daughter” (Carneiro da Cunha op. cit.: 50-51).<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the 19th century, the *população livre de cor* [free population of colour], in other words those who were evidently of African descent,

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7 In the same passage, the author recalls the case of a slave who was one of the leaders of the revolt of 1835, also in Bahia, whose death penalty was commuted to 600 lashes, after his master appealed to the Supreme Court of Justice, and concludes by quoting Nina Rodrigues: “Banishment for the freemen, flogging for the slaves, this was the repressive, convenient and economic solution that suffocated the seeds of future revolts without losses to the human property of the slave owners.”

grew faster than the white population, while part of the increase of the latter, in absolute numbers, was due to the incorporation of the whiter and richer *mestiços claros* [lighter mestizos], to the extent that foreign observers made a distinction between 'European whites' and local ones.

Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, who presents a table based on estimates and censuses of the distribution of Brazil's population according to colour and legal status, from the end of the 18th (1798) to the end of the 19th century (1872), draws attention to certain factors that distort the figures. Regarding the censuses, she says:

"There is a general tendency to believe more in the censuses than in any of the other estimates. However, the censuses were known to be subject to a number of inaccuracies. In ecclesiastical censuses slave owners often did not declare their slaves so as to be exempt from the tithe (Adrien.Balbi: 1822 tome 2:229); in government censuses they often did not reveal the number of freed slaves so as to exempt them from military conscription or to avoid paying certain taxes; and, after 1871, they frequently increased the number of slaves in order to receive compensation from the freedom fund for slaves that had died (see, for example, D. Alden: 1963). There were also political considerations, one of which is particularly relevant: according to the American traveller Thomas Ewbank (1856: 430), 'With respect to certain segments of the population, discretion was considered appropriate by the authorities. Thus no trustworthy comparison between the number of whites and the number of *pessoas livres de cor* [free people of colour] is provided, allegedly due to the overwhelming majority of the latter' (apud Carneiro da Cunha op. cit.: 18-19).

As to the other estimates, the same author continues:

"The estimates, on the other hand, although also false, reveal certain aspects that the censuses conceal. The relatively reduced numbers that the British attributed to the whites came from consular data based on criteria of separation and assimilation that looked extravagant to Brazilians and which probably considered the majority of 'local whites' as *pardos*. The British Consul in Pará, for example, made a distinction between native whites and foreign whites, whereas he maintained just one category for all free *pretos*, whether *pretos* or *pardos*. And we know that, in Brazil, free *pretos* and free

*pardos* were systematically distinguished in all census and the category *homem livre de cor* [free man of colour] simply wasn't applied." (Carneiro da Cunha op. cit.: 19-20.)

Continuing her comments on her table of estimates and of censuses, Carneiro da Cunha states:

"The numbers, however false they may be, do however make it clear that in the whole of Brazil during the 19th century, up until the abolition of slavery, the free population was larger than the slave population (although at times they were almost equally balanced), whereas the population *negra* and *parda* was always greater than the white population" (op. cit.: 19-20).

This information is significant as it reveals one of the characteristics of the racial situation in Brazil before abolition: the numerical superiority of non-whites over whites, even when the indigenous people are not included. It also reveals the tendency to distinguish African slaves from *crioulo* slaves - and *preto* freemen from *pardo* freemen -, while absorbing the whiter mestizos into the white group. This led foreign observers, including Gobineau, to emphasise the presence of *mulatos* even in the highest social levels. There is in fact a poem by Luís Gama,<sup>8</sup> "Bodarrada", that is a satirical confirmation of this permeability of the social structure that permitted African mestizos, especially the whiter ones, into the higher echelons.

### 1.3 Colour and social hierarchy in current Brazilian society

Currently, whites constitute over 50% of the Brazilian population. This is partly due to the incorporation of successive generations of whiter mestizos and also partly due to European immigration, which increased significantly between the end of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century, at rates which substantially altered the country's ethnic-racial

8 Editor's note: Luís Gonzaga Pinto da Gama (1830-1882), a black Bahiano, son of an ex-slave and a Portuguese slave owner, was brought up by his father, who sold him as a slave at the age of 10. He studied, escaped, and proved his status as a freeman. Poet and abolitionist, "Bodarrada", his poem mentioned by Nogueira, is part of the posthumous work (1954) *Poesias Satíricas*, and treats any idea of 'purity' of race ironically: "(...) *Bodes há de toda casta/ pois que a espécie é muito vasta.../ há cinzentos, há rajados, /baios, pampas e malhados./ Bodes negros, bodes brancos./ E, sejamos todos francos./ Uns plebeus e outros nobres./ Bodes ricos, bodes pobres./ Bodes sábios importantes, E também alguns tratantes.../Aqui, nesta boa terra,/marram todos, tudo berra (...)/ Para que tanto capricho?/ Haja paz, haja alegria./ Folgue e brinque a bodaria./ Cesse pois a matinada, /Porque tudo é bodarrada!*" The poem compares Brazil to a 'bunch of goats' of every conceivable type, colour, social class and profession, and ends up by asking why everyone just don't settle down and enjoy it all. It is written in free iambic tetrameters characterized by its distinctive rhyming scheme: AA, BB, CC, DD, EE, FF, G, HH, II.



composition, above all in the southern states, from São Paulo down to Rio Grande do Sul.

As far the country's social structure is concerned, although there have of course been changes, it cannot be denied that whites, *pardos* and *pretos* still occupy positions that closely correspond to those of their predecessors in the 19th century. It is even possible to state that, in the regions with the largest numbers of European immigrants and their descendants, discrimination against *pardos* and *pretos* has become, to say the least, more open and visible.

Furthermore, the 'whitening' of the population, as a consequence of European immigration in the above-mentioned regions, has probably resulted in the displacement to the whiter tonalities of what may be called the 'borderline type'. A human type that presents very slight traits of African ascendancy and is easily incorporated into the white group without being 'conspicuous', in other words, without attracting attention. This type is not clearly defined and is perceived only in a semi-conscious way, and may vary in accordance with the racial composition of each region or locality and, in particular, of the dominant social levels. This is an interesting hypothesis for further systematic investigation.

An undergraduate student from one of the north-eastern Brazilian states, where he studies at a Federal University, observed that in his State he had never doubted his classification as a white man, even though his signs of *mestiçagem* [metizagem] would be unlikely to pass unnoticed in São Paulo.

A white lady, who is married to a professor at São Paulo University, both from the state of Rio de Janeiro from where they moved to São Paulo about 15 years ago, told me that, when she returned to the state where she was born to visit relatives, she began to notice traits of African ascendancy among her friends and acquaintances that she was previously unaware of.

Several graduate students originating from a variety of States, mostly in the northeast, have shown an interest in the study of racial relations. However, they tacitly place themselves in the category of whites, despite their evident non-European features.

A colleague told me of an incident that occurred during a meeting of social scientists from all over Brazil that took place in one of the

north-eastern states. One of those present, a sociologist and militant of the *movimento negro* from Rio de Janeiro, became indignant with one of the other participants, who had been born in the state and had never lived outside the region, who insisted on identifying herself as a white woman. After insistently referring to her as non-white, the militant sociologist exclaimed: “What can one do, when a *negra* woman insists on presenting herself as a white one?”

I know of the case of a politician born in the northeast, with slightly *traços negroides* [traits that indicate African ascendancy], who was visited by a group of *negros* militants who wanted to enlist his support for one of their projects. With the intention of showing his support, he declared: “You, *negros*, know that I have always been concerned with your problems.” One of the members of the commission, indignantly, corrected him: “Not our problems, your Excellency! Yours too!”

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According to the 1980 census, Brazil’s population is composed of 54.7% whites, 38.4% *pardos*, 5.9% *pretos* and 0.6% *amarelos* (yellows).<sup>9</sup> As these figures are based on self-identification or declaration, one can say that, with the exception of the ‘yellows’, 44.3 % of the population recognise themselves as descending from *negros* and indigenous groups. And although it’s not possible to ascertain the proportion of whites that do have *negro* or indigenous ascendancy, whether not perceptible or ignored, I have no doubt that it must be more than 1/5 of the difference in the proportion of those who declare themselves to be whites and those who declare themselves to be non-whites (Moura 1983).

In the State of São Paulo, the same census showed the proportions as 75% whites, 18.5% *pardos*, 4.6% *pretos* and 1.9% yellows. Thus *pardos* and *pretos* combined made up 23.1% of the population. The proportion of whites and yellows in the population of São Paulo is greater than in the country as a whole, while that of *pardos* and *pretos* is lower.

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9 Editor’s note: Yellow – the colour *amarelo* in portuguese – was applied mainly to people with Japanese ancestry in Brazilian censuses and in common language until the 1980’s. It referred to descendants of immigrants who came to Brazil in great numbers from 1908 until the late 1970s. The category also include Koreans and Chinese. The terms then used in the censuses were white, *pardo*, *preto* and *amarelo*. Nogueira also uses the term *oriental*, as a synonym of *amarelo*.

In Brazil, the data from the censuses on the distribution of population by category of colour are essential for obtaining an idea of the relative size of the respective groups. However, one should not ignore their lack of precision, as it is largely the result of a generalised tendency among interviewees to consider themselves to be whiter than they actually are, or to avoid identification by taking refuge in euphemisms (Nogueira 1985). Personally, I find it difficult to believe that *pretos* in Brazil represent only 5 % to 6% of the population, as the 1980 census establishes. There must have been *pretos* who declared themselves to be *pardos* and *pardos* who declared themselves to be whites. The proportion of non-whites (excluding the category yellow) increased from 35% in 1940 to 41% in 1950, and it stabilized at 44% in 1980 with no new immigrant waves that would explain it (although with a minor, but somewhat disconcerting drop to 38%, between 1950 and 1960, which is probably due to the census's uncertain methods). This increase can be attributed to the greater degree of politicisation of non-whites, with the consequent increase in the proportion of those that decided to declare themselves in this category.<sup>10</sup>

Referring to the contrast between whites and non-whites in the areas of income distribution and education, nationwide, according to the 1980 census, Carlos A. Hasenbalg comments:

In Brazilian society the criterion of race plays an important role in the distribution of people among the different hierarchical social levels. The preliminary results of the Demographic Census of 1980 allow us to see this in relation to the two main dimensions of the social stratification system: levels of education and participation in the distribution of income. As concerns the level of education of the population of people over 5 years old, the proportion of people with less than one year of study or with no education at all was 25% among whites, 47.7% among *pretos* and 48% among *pardos*. At the opposite end of the scale, the proportion of people with 9 or more years of education was 14% among whites, 3% among *pretos* and 4.6% among *pardos*. The data referring to the average monthly income of the economically active population, 10 years old or above, shows that the proportion of those that receive a minimum wage was 24% among whites, 47% among *pretos*

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<sup>10</sup> For data on the increase of non-whites, cf. Moura, 1983.

and 44.7% among *pardos*. On the other side of the scale referring to the distribution of income, 14.4% of whites, 2.4% of *pretos* and 3.3% of *pardos* received more than five minimum wages (Hasenbalg 1983: 53).

The same author summarises the data from the 1976 National Household Survey (PNAD) on the participation of the respective *grupos de cor* (colour groups) in the country's occupational structure:

...the proportion of economically active people working in non-manual occupations was 23% among whites, 4.7% among *pretos* and 9.9% among *pardos*. Inversely, the non-white groups were disproportionately concentrated in manual agricultural occupations, characterised by the lowest level of wages: 44.4% among *pretos*, 42.8% among *pardos*, and only 30% among whites. (Idem: 54)

Referring to earlier works of his own, and those of Nelson do Vale Silva and Lúcia Helena G. de Oliveira, and without dismissing the historical causes such as “the aftermath of slavery and the competition with foreign immigrants during the period immediately after abolition”, Hasenbalg prefers to explain the racial stratification in Brazil as the result of the inequalities in the opportunities for whites and non-whites: “In other words, racism and discriminatory practices that currently exist are the fundamental causes for the reproduction of racial inequality and the restriction of *negros* and their descendants to positions of social subordination” (Ibidem: 56).

#### 1.4 The character and methodology of this study

Even though there are no explicit criteria for the direct selection of students based on racial features, it would be difficult if not impossible for a public institution, which does not charge fees, like the University of São Paulo, not to reflect the characteristics of Brazilian population's distribution according to categories of colour. The very process of selection that results from the economic inequality between whites and non-whites is, in itself, largely responsible for maintaining the highly disproportionate percentage of whites and the low percentage of non-whites among the students who directly benefit from what the University has to offer. As the majority of the teaching staff, who are responsible for achieving the

University's goals, is in their majority recruited from among previous students at the University, or from ex-students of similar institutions with a similar or even more restrictive selective process, the same distribution is seen here. These two segments – students and teaching staff – are distributed from the middle to the top levels of the university's social hierarchy, while the other institution's employees range from manual workers to positions that require higher educational qualifications in specific areas. It is therefore this last group that most directly and precisely reflects the occupational distribution of Brazil's population and of the State of São Paulo according to categories of colour.

It would thus be of the greatest relevance, in any census of the population of the University of São Paulo, to request information on the colour of its members. This information, as in the case of national censuses, would depend on self-identification or declaration. Clóvis Moura (op. cit.) affirms that, in the 1980 census, respondents used 136 expressions to describe their own colour or that of their family members<sup>11</sup>. In the case of a census within the University, it would be possible to compare the data resulting from self-identification or declaration with the observations of a well-prepared team of interviewers.

If this could be done, the results of such a census or of such a sample-based enquiry among groups of students and teachers of the University of São Paulo could show either the existence of a general selectivity or a specific one based on socio-economic factors.

We can assume that there is a general selectivity, one that extends to all the courses at the University, and a specific or differentiated selectivity that depends on the nature or the rules of each course. Courses with extremely competitive university admission exams that require full-time study, meaning that students are not able to work - such as Medical School and Engineering – would be shown to be more selective, whereas, in less demanding areas like Human Sciences and Literature, less selectivity would be found.

Another hypothesis, based on more than 30 years of experience working at the University of São Paulo, is that *pretos* are entirely absent, or very

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<sup>11</sup> Clóvis Moura made a mistake in this case. It was not the census of 1980 that asked this question, but a supplementary survey of the PNDA [National Household Survey], in 1976, as Hasenblag comments above.

rare, both among students and among the teaching staff, whereas *mulatos* and *pardos* although their numbers do not correspond to their proportion of the population as a whole, are represented in both segments. It is thus very rare to observe a didactic, cultural or scientific event, or even a board meeting, where they are not present and where they do not participate.

The Brazilian racial situation requires that data referring to *pretos* and to *mulatos* or *pardos* must be presented separately, as bringing them together under the single title of *negros* may end up by producing misleading results concerning the more precarious living conditions of the former in comparison to whites, and of their disadvantage, although not so large, when compared to *mulatos* and *pardos*.

By using the term *mulato* I intend to distinguish the *negro* mestizos from the descendants of native groups, whether mestizos or not.

As there was no prospect of a census being conducted at the University of São Paulo, nor of a sample-based enquiry, I decided to use my position as a participant observer to collect data about the teaching staff since my contact with the students, with the exception of graduate students, had almost ceased after my retirement.

The data that were collected in this way, between November 1983 and December 1984, obviously reflect the opportunities I had to participate in University events - although these were drastically reduced after my retirement - as well as the accuracy of my observations. Though, given my persistent interest in the study of racial relations, during which I got used to paying attention to features of African origin among Brazilians, I probably have this ability to a greater degree than the average Brazilian of my socio-economic level. Given certain situations and events, this skill implies noticing certain features of African origins that would probably pass unnoticed in people under ordinary conditions, even though these people are generally inclined not to draw attention to this aspect of themselves, preferring it to remain unnoticed. This bias is thus advantageous rather than prejudicial to the aims of this research.

Although the project began with the objective of observing situations and events at the University of São Paulo, I later extended it to events outside the University. Thus, during the above mentioned period, I systematically observed and described events at which I was either participating or

a spectator, at and outside the University of São Paulo, that were attended, typically or exclusively, by people from the middle to upper social levels engaged in these events, except for the few cases which I have used as counterpoints.

I did not intentionally seek out situations or events at which *negros* – *pretos* or *mulatos* – were present. The opportunities for observation appeared spontaneously as a result of my professional commitments and social interests. Thus, in addition to events at the University of São Paulo and at related or similar institutions, I observed and described events related to the life cycle that involved people personally known to me, such as baptisms, marriages, birthdays, funerals, tributes, domestic entertainment activities and a mixture of situations including the inauguration of a fashion shop for young people, a political rally demanding direct elections for the presidency of the Republic after the rejection of the Dante de Oliveira amendment to the constitution, and others that I will describe in due course.

One of the problems I faced was that of counting the number of people present at each event and their division according to racial categories. When this number was in single digits I counted those present one by one. When the number was relatively large, and subject to variations due to people arriving and others leaving, I attempted to count the number of those present when the group was relatively stable. In the first place, I aimed at assessing the total number. For instance, in the case of the number of people present at a church wedding, when the church was full, I counted the number of pews and the fixed or average number of people per pew. Multiplying this figure by the number of pews, I arrived at a total. If there were people standing, I counted them and added their number to the result. The next step was to count the number of those present who belonged to minority segments – *pretos*, *mulatos* and *orientals*. Subtracting this number from the total number of those present, I obtained the number of whites. Obviously, the larger the number of people present, the more imprecise the figures for each group became, without affecting, however, the assessment of the overall number of people present.

In some cases, perhaps in the majority, due to the nature and circumstances of the events, I did not have the opportunity to question people present about their own self-identification or how they would identify other

people present or about any other questions of interest to this enquiry. On the other hand, I was always concerned with accuracy as to the social level of those involved, including their occupations and other social roles, the sumptuousness of the environment, the solemnity of the occasion and of course the number of participants. I also sought, in the presentation of each event, to include any information and associations available that would contribute to its appreciation or interpretation. Obviously, one cannot expect any precise representativeness of the situations presented here according to strict statistical criteria.

The situations and events, which I am about to describe, were registered in notes as immediately as possible, and eventually documented (invitations, programmes etc.).

This study does not intend to be any more than the testimony of an individual, written in an eminently descriptive style, of the presence of *pretos* and *mulatos* in social situations and events whose participants belong to the middle and upper levels of the social hierarchy. Readers whose reality is analogous to mine – whites from the middle-class – may judge the plausibility of the results and may test them by making similar evaluations in similar circumstances, if they think this is worth undertaking. However, due to his professional condition and life experience, the author has allowed himself to presume that his conclusions reflect the collective and inter-subjective experience of the middle-class of Brazilian society in general, and specifically, of the State of São Paulo.

For the purposes of presentation and due to their apparent affinity, the situations and events have been divided into four groups: Group 1 – situations and events at the University of São Paulo; Group 2 – situations and cultural events outside the University of São Paulo; Group 3 – situations and events connected to the life cycle and to domestic life; and Group 4 – miscellaneous situations and events.

Each group includes an introduction, intended to give an overall view and emphasise the more significant data in terms of the purposes of this research, followed by a presentation of each of the cases, one by one.

The presentation concludes with a summary that lays out the main results of the investigation and discusses hypotheses or problems for future research.



## 2. Situations and Events at the University of São Paulo

### 2.1 Pretos and mulatos on the teaching staff

The University of São Paulo is made up of 32 teaching and research units, based in *campi* or at separate locations in the capital and interior of the State.

In general, the units are divided into departments. These form the smallest and most homogenous units in regard to teachers' qualifications, teaching and research. Each department administers undergraduate and graduate courses in its respective academic area.

The University has approximately 4,000 teachers, of which 75% work in the capital. On the campus in the capital, where the concentration of teachers and students is the largest, the units are spread over an area of 400 hectares, and there are further units and dependencies outside the campus at various locations around the city.

The campus at Ribeirão Preto has 581 hectares; the Piracicaba campus, 840; the São Carlos campus, 38.68; the Bauru campus, 33.66; and the Zootechnics Centre at Pirassununga, 2.333. Thus the overall area of the various units and aggregate bodies of the University occupy an area of more than 4,200 hectares.

Obviously, in the same campus, intimacy and conviviality between teachers (and students) occur most at the department level, less at the unit level and even less in the teaching and specialized research areas – human and biological sciences, technology, mathematics, philosophy, literature and arts – occurring only sporadically between teachers (and students) from different areas. Even rarefied, if they exist at all, is the conviviality between teachers and between students from different *campi*.

Thus it is difficult, if not impossible, for a teacher to obtain an overall view of the University or to be informed about the personal characteristics of his or her colleagues on the teaching staff, with the exception of those with whom he or she is in direct and constant contact in the same unit and department.

As the author of this research project I had direct and on-going contact with my colleagues from the Social Sciences department, in the School of Philosophy, Literature and Human Sciences, and in the Economics department, in the School of Economics and Administration, where I also worked.

In both departments, I have met *mulato* teachers and, at the Social Sciences department, I was acquainted with a *preto* colleague, who was born in an African country. I also know about two other *pretos* professors, one of whom works in one of the departments in the School of Philosophy, Literature and Human Sciences, and the other at São Carlos' Engineering School.

There are *mulatos* professors in several units and departments, such as in the School of Economics and Administration, in the Economics and Accountancy Departments, in the School of Philosophy, Literature and Human Sciences, in the Departments of Social Sciences, Geography, History and Philosophy, and in various departments at the Law School.

Antonio Cesarino Junior, a leading figure in developing Labour Law in Brazil and nowadays a Professor *Emeritus*, who gained international projection through his work, taught at the Law School – the oldest unit at the University of São Paulo – until a few years ago. For many years he was known as the only professor *preto* at the University. When he retired, Brazilian and international colleagues collaborated on writing a book as a tribute to him.

It is well known that, in the past, prejudice and discrimination made it impossible for professionals *pretos* to gain access to the teaching staff at the Law School. Almeida Nogueira (1912) tells how, in the 19th century, José Rubino de Oliveira had to repeat the entrance exams numerous times before being appointed to a Professor's Chair.

Nowadays, one would imagine that the underrepresentation of *pretos* and *mulatos* on the teaching staff at USP's teaching and research units is due rather to socio-economic inequality and to the lack of educational opportunities among these racial categories than to prejudice or discrimination. I have no knowledge of any case where one professor was preferred over another based on discriminatory criteria.

Consulting the mimeographed document "Distribution of Teaching Posts for the First Semester of 1984", produced by the Economics Department of the School of Economics and Administration, the author verified that out of 74 professors, two were *mulatos* and a further two "*orientais*". The document does not mention two *mulatos* who left the university during the semester to which it refers – one of whom occupied

a position as director, elected by his colleagues, and the other who was well-known for his published works and consultancy activities outside the University.

In the lists of professors for 1983, published by the Department of Social Sciences of the School of Philosophy, Literature and Human Sciences, there are the names of 61 professors, among whom I identify three *mulatos* and one *oriental*.

In February 1985, when it was expected that some of the Secretaries of the São Paulo State government would be appointed as ministers by president Tancredo Neves, the names of two *mulato* professors at the University of São Paulo appeared in the press as probable members of his Secretariat, one of whom was already the head of an important State institution.

In the cases of *mulato* professors, it is hard to know how they identify themselves in racial terms and what is their position in relation to the *movimento negro*. I believe that, in the majority of cases, their attitude is one of neutrality, which cannot be judged in a simplistic way.

If in some cases this apparent indifference to the *negro* population's problems could be seen as the manifestation of an eagerness for social mobility, similar to the conduct of a poor white person who becomes wealthy, in others their interest in the specific problems of racial discrimination could be seen to be implicit in the interest they take in broader reformist or revolutionary movements.

It should also be kept in mind that in general people are pragmatic and have a tendency not to involve themselves in troublesome situations or problems from which their social ambience has preserved them. A more intimate knowledge of these people would be necessary in order to know how they define themselves and what positions they take, with the exception of cases where the latter are public or ostensive.

In the case of one of our most prestigious *mulato* professors – whose ideas and intellectual activities are frequently commented on and who is generally considered to be a *mulato* by his colleagues –, I discovered through an intimate friend of his that in his private life he considers himself “in no way” as a *mulato*. When I was young, I met this professor's older brother, a doctor, who was also a *mulato*. When I visited him at his

home, the young doctor introduced me to his father, who was unmistakably *preto*. As he escorted me to the door, the young man explained that his father had not always been so dark, that his skin had darkened due to a kidney disease.

Out of a total of 12 events that I observed at the University of São Paulo during the period of research, which appear in the section entitled “Situations and events in the University of São Paulo”, nine of them included the presence of *mulatos*; six the presence of *orientais*; and one the presence of *pretos*.

In the events narrated case by case below, I have observed the presence of *mulatos* as teachers, members of examination boards, candidates for academic posts, members of the public or speakers in formal occasions. However, I only observed the presence of *pretos* at one of the 12 events. Thus this investigation shows that there are almost no events at the University of São Paulo without the participation of *mulatos*. It also shows that the participation of *orientais* is rarer, and that of *pretos*, virtually inexistent. Considering the proportions of these racial categories in the population of the State of São Paulo, shown by the 1980 census, there can be no doubt about the underrepresentation of *mulatos* and *pretos* and the overrepresentation of *orientais* at the University. This situation is not due to selective criteria within the University, but mainly to the life conditions and social contexts of these segments of the Brazilian population.

## 2.2 Events at which I was present

### Congregation meetings and solemn sessions

In December 1984, I attended a Congregation meeting and a solemn session at the School of Economics and Administration, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the University of São Paulo and celebrate the launching of a book on the history of the School, coordinated by Professor Alice P. Cannabrava.

I counted 35 people at the table and in places of honour, including the rector, the representatives of the governor and of other units of the University, the director and vice director of the School itself as well as the members of the Congregation, among them two *mulatos*, one of whom held a high-ranking post at the University and had an important role in the session.

Those that attended, according to my calculation, numbered 40, including professors who were not members of the Congregation, employees, students and ex-students. Among these 40 people, I counted the presence of 4 *mulatos* and 5 *orientais*. [...].

#### Meeting of graduate-level professors

In October 1984, I attended a meeting of Anthropology professors from the graduate course at the Social Sciences Department of the School of Philosophy, Literature and Human Sciences. 15 people attended, 9 men and 6 women; 14 whites and 1 *mulato*.

#### Academic exam for Full Professor

In June 1984, I read a notice in the *Folha de São Paulo* concerning the examination of João Baptista Vilanova Artigas for Full Professor at the School of Architecture and Urbanism.

Born in Paraná in 1915, he graduated from the Polytechnic School of São Paulo in 1937, and became the State of São Paulo's most famous architect, and one of the most prestigious in Brazil. He gained international recognition due to the originality, boldness and beauty of his projects, which include the building that houses the School of Architecture and Urbanism at the Armando de Sales Oliveira Campus, the Morumbi Stadium and the headquarter of the Santa Paula Yacht Club, as well as a new plan for the Vale do Anhangabaú, with walkways, viaducts, trade union and residential buildings, schools, industries, most of which are in the State of São Paulo.

He was one of the founders and organisers of the School of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo in 1948, and in 1962 he conceived the bold architectural project for the building that housed it. He was the spokesman of "more than 30 classes of graduates all over Brazil", according to Professor Paulo Mendes da Rocha, and together with Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, he was one of Brazil's most award-winning architects.

Due to his political militancy and to his critical position as regards capitalism, Artigas was arrested several times after the 1964 military coup, and in 1969 he was suspended from the University under Institutional Act nº 5. He was readmitted as a professor at the School of Architecture and Urbanism in 1980, under the amnesty offered by the government of General João Figueiredo.

In the oral and didactic examinations, Artigas once again showed his exceptional professional qualities, his erudition and his concern with social problems. He concluded his oral exams with slides showing his most important works, accompanied by explications and personal remembrances.<sup>12</sup>

Although the exam was given very little press coverage, due to the candidate's prestige and to the obvious implications of redressing the wrongs he had suffered this was probably the exam that attracted more public interest than any other at the University of São Paulo over the previous 20 years.

Although a precise analysis of the public that attended is not possible, everything seems to indicate that in their majority they were made up of ex-students and teachers from the School itself where the exam was happening. However, I also recognised teachers from other units; a student who came up to speak to me told me that he was from the Department of Social Sciences.

At the didactic examination, the number of people present was estimated at 70, distributed as follows: Whites – 61.43% (43); *Mulatos* – 32.85% (23); *Orientais* – 5.71% (4); *Pretos* – 0. For the oral exam the public was estimated at 300 people, distributed as follows: Whites – 85% (255); *Mulatos* – 10% (30); *Orientais* – 5% (15); *Pretos* – 0.

Both at the didactic and the oral examinations, the predominance of whites is evident, followed by *mulatos* and *orientais*, with a complete absence of *pretos* (excluding those employed to operate the tape recorders and projectors and others that came in and out bringing water, coffee and chalk).

The author cannot explain the discrepancy between the substantial presence of *mulatos* at the didactic examination, a number that was reduced by a third at the oral examination. It was estimated that one third of the public for the didactic examination was made up of women. Of the five members of the examination board, one appeared to be a *mulato claro* [light-skinned *mulato*].

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12 For biographical details of João Batista Vilanova Artigas, see the article published on his death in the *Folha de São Paulo*: “Sepultado Vilanova Artigas, o arquiteto dos jovens” (local report); “Preocupado com a utopia” (local report); “Nas construções, a marca da genialidade” (commentary by Vivien Lande, January 14, 1985, page 13); “João Batista Vilanova Artigas. As idéias do velho mestre”, interview with Paulo Markun, two months before his death, and “Mozart e Salieri”, commentary by Beatriz Albuquerque, January 19, 1985, p. 51.

### Academic examination for Associate Professor

On December 12, 1984, I participated as an examiner at the academic examination for Associate professor in the Department of Social Sciences at the School of Philosophy, Literature and Human Sciences. The other four examiners were all women and there were no non-white participants. The examination consisted in judging the *curriculum vitae*, with no sessions open to the public.

### Academic examination for Distinguished Professor

From December 3 to 7, 1984, I participated as an examiner for *Distinguished Professor* in the same Department.

The committee included five men, among whom there was one *mulato claro*.

During the 'practical examination' which, in this case, consisted of the analysis of myths, two young women were also present, one of whom was white and the other *mulato*.

23 people were present at the oral examination, in addition to the examiners, distributed according to colour as follows: Whites – 78.3% (18); *Mulatos* – 17.4% (4); *Pretos* – 0; *Orientais* – 4.3% (1).

Due to a lapse on my part, I failed to note the number of those present at the didactic examination. At the reception held for the successful candidate, on the night of December 7, those present were estimated at approximately 70, among whom nine were *mulatos*. There were no *pretos* present.

### Postgraduate Admission Committee

A) In December 1983, I participated as an examiner for admission to a Doctor's degree at the Economics Department of the School of Economics and Administration, in which the candidate was the grandson of a Japanese family.

In addition to the examiners, there were six persons attending, five men and one woman, all white with the exception of one of the men, who was a *mulato*. Of the five examiners, three were white and two, *mulato*. It is interesting to note that no *orientais* were present.

B) Also in December 1983, I participated as examiner for admission to a Master's degree at the History Department of the School of Philosophy, Literature and Human Sciences. Of the examiners, one was *mulato*, another

white, and the third had slightly negroides features. Of the fifteen assistants, one was *mulato*.

#### Defence of Ph.D.'s theses

A) In November 1984, I participated as an examiner of a Ph.D. thesis where the candidate was a female, a professor from one of the federal universities from a state in Central Brazil. Her thesis, which was in anthropology, was the result of her studies at the Social Sciences Department of the School of Philosophy, Literature and Human Sciences. The committee was composed of three white professors. Among the two stand-by substitutes, one was a *preto* professor from Zaire and the other was white.

B) On December 10, 1984, I participated as an examiner in the defence of a Ph. D. thesis in anthropology, in the same Department, where the candidate had taken the gay movement in São Paulo as his subject. The other two examiners on the commission were women, both white.

C) On the same day, I participated in another committee for the approval of a research project for a Ph. D. thesis in the same department, in the area of sociology. The candidate presented a project on the theme of nationalism among intellectuals in Rio de Janeiro during the *República Velha* (1889-1930). The other two examiners were both white male professors.

#### Bestowing the title of Emeritus Professor

In August 1984, I was present at the ceremony to bestow the title of *Emeritus* Professor on Antonio Candido de Mello e Souza, who had retired as a professor of the Literature Department of the School of Philosophy, Literature and Human Sciences, after having worked for many years as professor at the Sociology and Anthropology Department at the then School of Philosophy, Sciences and Literature.

The ceremony took place in the large reception hall of the School of Philosophy, Literature and Human Sciences; the places were among the most sought-after for any such event over the last 20 years. At the table, in addition to the Professor, sat the School's director, professor Ruy Galvão de Andrada Coelho, and the representative of the Congregation and member of the Literature Department, Professor João Alexandre, who had proposed the title of *Emeritus* for Antonio Candido.



The public was unusually diversified, including professors, students and employees from the School of Philosophy, Literature and Human Sciences, professors representing other units from the University of São Paulo, including the Law School, where Antonio Candido had been a student, as well as representatives from two of São Paulo's State Universities – UNICAMP and UNESP.

I calculated that 250 people were present, distributed in racial terms as follows: Whites – 92.8% (232); *Mulatos* – 4.8% (12); *Pretos* – 1.2% (3); *Orientais* – 1.2% (3).

The very high presence of whites (92.8%) is evident, similar to what occurred at Professor Vilanova Artigas' oral examination that ended his exams for Full Professor. On the other hand, of all the events at the University of São Paulo which are narrated in this article, this was the only one at which the presence of *pretos* was equivalent to that of *orientais* (1.2%). At the same event the presence of *mulatos* corresponded to 4.8%. On the way out, a retired Full Professor from the Geography Department introduced me to one of the *pretos* participants as his colleague.

#### Inauguration of a scientific society

In December 1983, I participated in a meeting for the inauguration and election of the first directors of the Brazilian Society of History and Science. Founded on the initiative of professors from the University of São Paulo, the new entity is, by nature, multidisciplinary and affiliation is open to interested parties nationwide.

At the session there was a representative from the Federal University of Pernambuco, who had been invited because he happened to be in São Paulo at the time; however almost all the others present were well known professors from the University of São Paulo, from the various areas representing the biological and human sciences and technologies, according to the conventional division.

Among those present were a number of the most renowned professors in these areas, who also enjoyed international repute. This was thus a unique occasion for taking a sample, if not a statistical one, that was highly representative, at least in its trans-sectorial aspect, of the teaching staff of the Institution, with the exclusion of the literature and arts department.

At the time when I made the count, 44 people were present, distributed according to colour criteria in the following way: Whites – 50% (22); *Mulatos* – 18.18% (8); *Orientais* – 2.27% (1); Dubious or borderline – 29.54% (13); *Pretos* – 0.

As was to be expected, the whites predominated, totalling 50% of those present, or 79.5% if one adds to the previous percentage those ‘borderline’ individuals, of whom it was not possible either to be sure or to entirely exclude the presence of *negroide* features. There was a significant representation of *mulatos* (18.18%), even when excluding any ‘borderline cases’. The one oriental present represented 2.27% of the total. There were no *pretos* present. The 13 ‘borderline cases’ - that is, *morenos*<sup>13</sup> about whom there was some doubt as to whether or not their appearance indicated the presence of Afro-descendant marks - represented 29.54%. There were five people at the table, including three white females, an oriental female and a *mulato* female. There were only 7 women among the public, that is, 19.9% of the total; the female gender was therefore neatly underrepresented.

In Brazil, people are considered to be white, regardless of having or not African ascendancy, as long as they have no evident features of this ascendancy. There is an indefinable borderline of inclusion that very possibly varies from region to region, in accordance with the density of the *negros* and *mestizos* in the population. Thus there are always people with slight traces of *negroide* features who are incorporated into the white population; the limits of tolerance and the frequency of this inclusion depends on the regional demography.

In his classic study on the racial situation in Salvador, Donald Pierson (1942)<sup>14</sup> used the expression ‘white from Bahia’ to refer to individuals who were socially considered to be white but who nevertheless revealed traces of African ancestry. As this phenomenon is by no means restricted to Bahia, I prefer to use the expression ‘borderline’ to designate these individuals.

After this first experience of trying to identify ‘borderline’ cases in the task of counting the people present at events to be described according to

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13 Editor’s Note: The Brazilian colour category *Morena* or *Moreno* is used either as synonym or even as an euphemism for *pardos* or *mulatos claros*. It is also very frequently used as a term of admiration to refer to sunburnt whites. It is also used, rather like “dark” in English to refer to people who are not exactly blondes, even though they may not be perceived as having African ancestry

14 Editor’s note: Nogueira refers to the first edition of Donald Pierson’s book, published in Brazil in 1945 with the title *Mulatos e pretos na Bahia: Um estudo de contato racial*, by Companhia Editora Nacional (SP). A new edition was published in 1971.

colour criteria, I decided not to be concerned any further with this, preferring to incorporate them into those numbered as whites.

In a previous work (Nogueira, op.cit.), I have argued that the cases of families that have been able to trace back to illustrious *negros* ancestors show how, by selective marriage with white or whiter partners, the process of being incorporated into the white population has been completed within three or four generations.

### **3. Situations and Cultural Events Outside the University of São Paulo**

In this section I've included events that I witnessed during my investigations in education or cultural institutions that are not part of the University of São Paulo. In all there were six events, including the installation of the Board of Directors at an educational foundation, a meeting of that Board, a meeting to discuss the profession of sociologist in one of the teaching units of the same foundation, the admission ceremony of a new member to the Paulista Academy of Letters and two lectures which I gave on racial relations, one of which was to teachers and graduate students at the School of Philosophy, Sciences and Literature, promoted by a foundation in Botucatu, and the other to teachers and students of a graduate course on the campus of UNESP in that city. (...)

The inaugural session of the Board of Directors  
of an educational foundation

This event took place in December 1983 and, although not specifically related to the University of São Paulo, involved the presence and participation of its teachers and thus, due to its nature, was very similar to the events narrated above.

Given that a number of irregularities had occurred in the administration of the foundation and in the teaching institutions that it funded, the Foundation's Curator decided to dismiss the members of the previous Board of Directors and replace them with a group of intellectuals, most of whom were teachers at the University of São Paulo.

On the day of the session there were 10 people at the table, of which 8 were men and 2 were women, among which there was 1 *mulato*, 7 whites

(including one with obviously European features whose father had been a *mulato*) and 2 *morenos*, probably of African ancestry.

The public, which I calculated at around 50 people, was made up of teachers from the University of São Paulo, teachers and students from the teaching units funded by the Foundation, as well as other guests. The distribution per category of colour was as follows: Whites – 62% (31); *Mulatos* – 14% (7); *Pretos* – 4% (2); *Orientais* – 6% (3); Borderline – 14% (7). [...].

The two main teaching institutions funded by the Foundation administered undergraduate courses along the same lines as those of the University of São Paulo, at its campus in the capital. The courses were in Social Sciences and Librarianship. Although these were paid courses, the monthly rates are considered below-average and, as the classes were given in the city centre, they offered a greater chance to people who work to attend them than the courses offered by USP. This may explain, in part, the relatively high proportions of *mulatos*, *pretos* and *morenos*, some of whom probably descend from Africans. These are obviously hypotheses, not facts.

#### Meeting of the Board of Directors of the educational foundation

In October 1984, I was present at a meeting of the Board of Directors of the School of Sociology and Politics of the São Paulo Foundation. Those present included 9 counsellors, 2 directors and the Curator of the Foundation. Of the counsellors, 7 were men and 2 women. All those present were white, including three with probable African ascendancy.

#### Discussion of the profession of sociologist

In May 1984, I visited the head office of the School of Sociology and Politics Foundation, in the morning, in order to deal with a matter in hand with the Director-General, Professor Gabriel Cohn, and was unexpectedly invited to participate in a discussion that was about to begin about the profession of sociologist.

They told me that an impasse had occurred, as the meeting coincided with another of a nationwide nature, in which the same theme was to be debated, and consequently many of the interested parties and guests that had been invited were no longer able to be present. Even so, I calculated the number of people present as 50. The majority were students and teachers of

the foundation's social sciences course; a representative of the Sociologists' Association of the State São Paulo was also present.

There were 3 people at the table, two of whom were white and one *mulato* (all men). The 50 people present were distributed according to colour in the following way: Whites – 56% (28); *Mulatos* – 30% (15); *Pretos* – 6% (3); *Orientais* – 8% (4). The relatively high proportion of *mulatos* is worth noting, as well as the presence of *pretos*, which would seem to reflect an increasing level of awareness in relation to their specific problems, with the consequent motivation to study social sciences.

Session in honour of a new member of the Paulista Academy of Letters

In May 1984, I was present at the Paulista Academy of Letters, at the ceremony in honour of a new member of the house, Ibiapaba de Oliveira Martins.

The June/July issue of the magazine 'The Writer', produced by the Brazilian Union of Writers, noted in an article that the new member had been proposed by Tito Lívio Ferreira, a colleague at the Academy, who was quoted as saying: "Never since I've been here have I seen so many people in that kind of event".

The same magazine commented on the diversity of ideological tendencies represented:

"(...) A variety of tendencies were represented, with the presence of Ignácio Loyola Brandão, Fábio Lucas, Ricardo Ramos, and even the poet Mario Chamie, formerly the Cultural Secretary of the municipality of São Paulo. And personalities such as Paulo de Tarso Santos, ex-Secretary of Education in the government of Franco Montoro, trade unionists such as Waldemar Maffei and Joaquim Cardoso, and government authorities such as R. Nacim Saad, the regional delegate for labour relations in São Paulo, politicians such as Gíóia Junior, a federal deputy for the PDS and the town councillor Luiz Tenório de Lima, member of the National Commission for the Legalisation of the Communist Party." And further: the representative of the Paulista Association of Letters, Genésio Pereira, and the veteran writer Abguar Bastos, who before the military coup of 1964 had been president of the Nationalistic Parliamentary Front.

I calculated the number of people present at 300, distributed in terms of colour as follows: Whites – 82% (247); *Mulatos* – 16% (50); *Pretos* – 1% (3);

*Orientais* – o. One of the three *pretos* present was a well-known member of the Brazilian Union of Writers. Of the 22 academics present, two were *mulato*.

#### Lectures on racial relations

In May 1984 I gave a lecture entitled “Race Relations in Brazil” at the School of Philosophy, Sciences and Literature of the Toledo Teaching Institute in Botucatu. Approximately 50 people were present, including teachers and students, distributed in the following way: Whites – 86% (43); *Mulatos* – 10% (5); *Pretos* – 4% (2); *Orientais* – o.

After concluding my lecture I invited questions from those present, but there was no response. It was only after the session was closed that some of the white teachers present asked me questions.

In November 1984, I returned to Botucatu to give a lecture on race relations to students of the graduate course in medicine, veterinary studies, agronomy and biology, at the Julio de Mesquita Paulista State University. There were 31 students present, among which I counted 3 *mulatos* and 1 *oriental*. In addition to the coordinator, three visitors were present, one of whom was a *mulato claro*. All of those present were university graduates.

After my presentation I invited questions from those present, however only one of the youngest students, a *mulato*, asked me whether racial prejudice was instinctive, that is, innate, “because in all living species, similars attract and differents repel!”. When the session was officially closed, another student, a *pardo* and one of the oldest among the group, came up to me, to share his anxiety about the aggravation of prejudice that he had been observing.

Before beginning my lecture I distributed a questionnaire to the students in which they were asked, apart from the usual data concerning self-identification, to classify all those present between whites, *pardos*, *pretos* and yellows, including the category to which they felt to belong. I received answers from 31 students, of which 13 were women and 18 men. The ages of the students were between 22 and 41, with average ages of between 26 and 30, and a declining numbers of older students, as follows: Up to 25 – 12.9% (4); 26-30 – 38.7 (12); 31-35 – 22.5 (7); 36-40 – 19.4%; 41-45 – 6.5% (2).

As far as identification by colour was concerned, 3 students recognised the presence of 2 *pardos* in their group and 7, the presence of 1, whereas I had identified 3. 23 registered the presence of a single yellow student (female) and 2 stated that all those present were white. There was unanimity as to

the absence of *pretos*. The total number of people present was evaluated at between 23 and 34. This was largely due to the late arrival of some students and because some included visitors in their calculations. The two students who indicated ‘all of them’ as white did not give a total for those present.

One of the students who entered the word ‘all’ into the category ‘whites’, added a comment: “If I were to count all the whites, *pardos*, etc., apart from getting it wrong, it would distract my attention from the lecture!!!” This 27-year-old student, who considered himself white, was a student of genetics.

The most significant fact related to the exercise of classifying the others is that only 10 students, or approximately a third of those present, identified the presence of *pardos*. In other words, 21 of those present, or two thirds, failed to notice this category, including them in the white category.

As concerns self-identification, 28 of those present, or 90.3%, considered themselves white; none considered themselves *pardo* or *preto*, and just one considered herself yellow. 2 people left this item unanswered, one 29 year-old and one 38 year-old; they happened to be two of the three who had been identified as *pardos*.

Thus, when we consider the classification of *mulatos* and *pardos*, the data confirms the tendency towards ambiguity, especially when the individuals in these categories belong to the medium or superior social levels. The data also confirm their tendency towards not assuming their identity. These results serve as a suggestion for specific research under more appropriate conditions to compare the tendencies in self-identification and in the identification of others in terms of racial categories, in the state São Paulo and in Brazil as a whole.<sup>15</sup>

#### **4. Situations and Events Connected to the Life Cycle and to Domestic Life**

This section covers 21 events<sup>16</sup>, including baptisms, birthdays, a priest’s anniversary, weddings, a visit to an old people’s home, a visit to a

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<sup>15</sup> Editor’s note. This last sentence belonged originally to the introduction to this item, here suppressed, where the author announced his results.

<sup>16</sup> Editor’s Note. The description of 8 events were suppressed in this edition: “a baptism”; “the birthday of a 60-year-old lady”; “the reception for a young engineer”; “a wedding in Taubaté (May, 1984)”; “two weddings in São Paulo (June and October, 1984)”; “a wedding in Lorena (December, 1984)”; “a visit to an old people’s home, a 7th Day Catholic Mass”.

preta who was allegedly over a hundred years old, funerals and recreational gatherings.

[...] the presence of *mulatos* was observed in 80% of these events or situations, and that of *pretos*, in 50%. *Mulatos* appear as members of families that are socially accepted as white, as visitors received with the greatest deference and as participants in a wide variety of events.

There are some cases of special interest: 1) a young man from a traditional white family who married the daughter of a *mulato*, who was also the niece of a *mãe de santo*, whom he had met at an Umbanda cult; at his catholic wedding the young man wore the same white suit and yellow tie that he had ordered for his Umbanda wedding ritual; 2) two *mulato* executives who were received with great deference to play bowls at the house of their industrialist neighbour; 3) a *mulato* whom I met in the house of a widow whom I was visiting to offer my condolences. When I asked her who he was, she proudly replied: "He's my son!"; 4) a *mulato* woman who owned an old people's home, whose daughter married the grandson of a famous judge and writer from the state of Minas Gerais, in defiance of his family's prejudice; 5) the cases of priests and deacons, of prosperous members of the liberal professions, and of politicians. In all of these cases, in general, the *mulatos* protected themselves with the discretion displayed by those who risk being demoralised, as in Goffman's conception.<sup>17</sup>

## Birthdays

### A) A girl's birthday

In October 1984, I attended the birthday party of a white girl who was turning 10, whose mother was a divorced social worker.

Including adults and children, there were 50 people present, including a white lady with *negroide* features (nose, lips and face), a teacher and art

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17 Editor's note: In his master's thesis, defended in 1945, under the orientation of Donald Pierson, at the then Free School of Sociology and Politics (SP), the analysis proposed by Nogueira of illness as a social experience clearly foresees the concept of stigma, coined in the 1960s by Erving Goffmann to explain the particular form of prejudice suffered by people afflicted with certain illnesses or physical deficiencies. This dissertation - *Vozes de Campos de Jordão. Experiências psíquicas e sociais do tuberculoso pulmonar no Estado de São Paulo* - was published in book form in 1952, and a new edition, organized by this editor, was published by Editora Fiocruz in 2009. It should be noted that, between 1945 and 1947, Nogueira and Goffman were contemporaries in the Ph.D. program at the Sociology Department of the University of Chicago. Cf. Cavalcanti, Maria Laura "Oracy Nogueira e a antropologia no Brasil: o estudo do estigma e do preconceito racial", *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*. Vol. 31, pp. 5-28, 1996.



exhibitor, who was married to a *mulato escuro* in the liberal professions (who was not present).

This woman's husband is one of the most elegant men I know. His suits are made of English light cashmere, ordered from his tailor, and his shirts and underclothing are bought at *Rua Augusta*. As well as a successful professional, whose clients are wealthy and the large majority of whom are white, he also has an exceptional talent for business. He is a property owner in the capital as well as in other municipalities of Greater São Paulo, as well as possessing valuable antiquities, jewellery and art works. His friends consider him "a true diplomat" due to his elegant manners and the way that he dresses. He also has his own driver.

The last time that I visited them, he happened to mention that his new driver was *preto* and that a neighbour's dog always tried to attack him, to which his wife responded: "Some *preta* [black person] must have mistreated this dog".

The relatives included the girl's grandparents (a University Professor and a high school teacher), her mother (a social worker), a bachelor uncle who was a civil engineer, an aunt who was a psychologist married to a business manager, and their two-year-old daughter; an uncle who was an economist married to a psychologist, and their three-year-old daughter; a cousin who was an economist and married to a social worker and their two daughters of 7 and 3 years old.

The other visitors included: a couple, one an architect and the other a sociologist, with their 10-year-old daughter; a couple of writers in their 70s; a 40-year-old economist who was divorced; a woman who worked in a real estate agency and her boyfriend; a lawyer with her mother; a 60-year-old woman, the wife of a lawyer, with her divorced daughter and 2 children; a social worker with her daughter; 3 engineers who were colleagues of the uncle, one of whom was accompanied by his wife and a young daughter; an industrialist with three young boys; a retired judge and his wife, who was a retired teacher; and a 35-year-old *mulata*, a single mother who had been brought up by an aunt of the hostess, with her 10-year-old son.

While the *mulata* girl helped serve the guests, her son, whom the girl's employer, a widow with no children, is bringing up as a middle-class boy, played with all the other children, very naturally.

The white lady with *negroide* features is one of the most respected friends of the birthday girl's grandmother, and if she'd been accompanied by her husband, he would certainly have been treated with the utmost deference. The two children of the couple, one a lawyer and the other an economist, have both had exceptional social and professional success and, despite their slightly *negroide* features, they consider themselves to be white and are also thought to be white in the social *milieu* to which they belong.

#### B) The birthday of two young people

Also in October 1984, I went to the birthday celebration of two young men, both married, who live in São Paulo. As they both had birthdays in the same month they decided to commemorate on the same day, a Sunday, at their parents' house in a town about a hundred kilometres from the capital.

A third brother, also married, lives in São Paulo. All three are white, married to white women and successful both socially and professionally. The oldest is a partner in a small but flourishing industrial firm; the second is an architect and the third took over his father's commercial activity. Two of the three have children – all four of whom are white and very European looking.

The father is *moreno*, a 'borderline', and the mother is the daughter of Italians, very white and European looking. The two paternal uncles are whiter than the father, the grandmother and two aunts are all fat and *mulatas escuras*, and fat like "*negras minas*"<sup>18</sup>.

About two years ago the parents retired from their retail business in São Paulo and returned to the town where they were born, where they live in a large house that was built by their architect son, with a 10 by 5 metre swimming pool in front of it and a metallic entrance door with remote control.

Everything was busy in the house, starting in the morning and continuing for about nine hours until about seven in the evening, with aperitifs, soft drinks, beer, whiskey and snacks prepared for the guests. The barbecue began at 12 and lasted for the rest of the day.

While the adults drank beer, ate and chatted, the adolescents and the children spent most of the time in and around the pool.

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<sup>18</sup> Editor's Note: *Negra Mina*, or *Negro Mina*, is a term that designates women and men from one of the different groups of slaves that arrived in Brazil. The slaves were classified according to the port of origin. In this case, the port is the Castle of São Jorge da Mina, in West Africa.

I counted a little over 30 adults and 10 to 15 children, distributed as follows:

- the host couple, described above. Age: 60
- their three sons, all *claros* [light skinned]; their wives and grandchildren, idem.; sons and stepdaughters, all around 30 years old.
- six married couples of approximately the same age with their respective children, all white, except for one couple of which the wife, a niece of the hosts, was a *mulata clara*.
- three married white couples of around 40.
- the hosts' brother, an older white man who was a lawyer and a judge, and his wife, both around 60 years old.
- one of the sons' parents-in-law, the father-in-law was tall, white, of the northern Italian type, and his wife a *mulata clara* whose daughter, the daughter-in-law of the hosts, is white. The parents-in-law were around 60 years old.
- a white couple from São Paulo, retired teachers in their 60s.

## Recreational domestic gatherings

### A) A barbecue

In October 1984, a civil engineer, a bachelor, white, around 30, decided to give a barbecue at his parents' house in São Paulo.

It took place on a Sunday and started at 11 o'clock. At 12 o'clock the food began to be served, accompanied by beer and soft drinks.

There were between 25 and 30 people present, as follows:

- the owners of the house, a couple in their 60s;
- their son, mentioned above, one of their daughters, a divorced social worker of around 30, accompanied by her daughter (the hosts' granddaughter) who was about 10; another daughter of about 20 with her husband who was a company manager of around 30, with their two-year-old daughter (also the hosts' granddaughter).
- a white civil engineer from Ceará, a friend and colleague of the son, in his 30s, with his wife of around the same age and their daughter of 2 years;
- another civil engineer from Ceará, a friend of the former who had invited him, a *mulato claro*, and his white wife, both around 30, accompanied by a friend, also white and of about the same age;

- an economist, white, of around 30, who was a nephew of the owners of the house, and his wife, white, a social worker of around 20, with their two daughters of 3 and 7 respectively;

- a friend of the son who was giving the party, around 30, a salesman, accompanied by his wife, a computer specialist of around the same age, white, with their daughter of 2. There was also a wife's friend who was white and around the same age;

- the father of the house's owner, a white lawyer in his 60s, accompanied by his *mulata clara* wife, who happened to mention in conversation that she was a cousin of a female professor at the University of São Paulo who was married to an important member of the National Congress. The couple was accompanied by their son who was a *mulato claro*. The family has a high standard of living, with a large house in one of the most valued beaches in the State.

## B) Bocce and other activities

In September 1984, while I was in a small town in the interior of the State of São Paulo, less than 220 kilometres from the capital, I visited an industrialist, who was a northern Italian and married to a wife who came from one of the ex-Soviet countries after the Second World War. They were married immediately after the Armistice, and came to Brazil, where their only son was born. Today the son is around 30 and works at a high level of administration in one of the establishments of which his father is a partner.

The father has light brown hair and reddish skin and the mother is blonde. The son is blonde like his mother, and after his divorce from his first wife, with whom he had a son, married a woman who was half Japanese and half Brazilian. They live in São Paulo and own a large house on one of the most valued beaches in the State, as well as this house in the mountains, with a swimming pool and bowling alley.

I arrived at 11:30 for a brief visit, and was taken to the bocce alley where the owner of the house was playing bocce with one of his Italian partners who also owned a large house in the neighbourhood. The pair was playing against an executive from a company that did not belong to the group, and a liberal professional, both *mulatos* from the capital who owned large houses in the same condominium.

While I was being taken to the bocce alley, my wife was taken onto the terrace besides the swimming pool where the hostess and her daughter-in-law were sitting at a table laid with coffee, cakes, wafers and desserts.

Her son and grandson could be seen from the swimming pool. The grandson was blonde, showing no sign that his mother was Japanese-Brazilian. With them was a young local tradesman, of similar age, who came from one of the most traditional families of the municipality, whose maternal grandmother was Lebanese. He was with his son of about 4 or 5 years old.

The two men whom I identified as *mulatos* have white wives and live and socialise with the other owners of large houses in the condominium without suffering any discrimination. I don't know how they identify themselves in terms of their skin colour, but I'm sure that in the community they are thought of as rich white men. During our brief contact both gave me the impression of extraordinary self-confidence and self-esteem as well as an obvious feeling of well-being in their *milieu*.

## Weddings

### A) São Paulo, December 1983

In December 1983 I attended the catholic wedding of João Antonio, 22, white, the son of a lawyer and journalist friend of mine, from a traditional family, whose wife, white and blonde, is of Italian descent.

The ceremony took place at the *Igreja da Cruz Torta* in the neighbourhood of Pinheiros. The whole church was decorated with wicker baskets of white chrysanthemums. The bride, 20 years old, arrived in a veil, tiara and white dress, in the traditional style, and the bridegroom, unexpectedly, wore a white suit and yellow tie.

I estimated the number of people present at around 400.

The father of the bride was a *mulato* of medium height, stocky, and the mother, a white lady. I was later informed that he was a male nurse and also an important figure in an Umbanda<sup>19</sup> temple. The bride was a *morena*, a girl with straight hair, with no visible signs of African ancestry.

After the religious ceremony there was a reception with food and drinks in the reception room of the apartment building where the family of the

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<sup>19</sup> Editor's Note: Umbanda is a syncretic Brazilian religion in which African, Catholic and Indigenous practices and beliefs melt together.

bridegroom lived, in the district of Higienópolis. Almost the same people who attended the church service were present at the reception.

About a third of those present were relatives and guests of the bride, and I calculated that most of these were *mulatos claros*, with the exception of two uncles who were dark-skinned *mulatos*.

The remaining two thirds were made up of relatives and friends of the bridegroom, including male and female cousins whom I already knew, 'borderline types', a girl with oriental features who was married to a white man, both around 40, a Japanese man about the same age, with a streak of grey hair, married to a bridegroom's white cousin and accompanied by his nine-year-old daughter, *morena*, and a baby boy in a pram, *oriental*.

I learned later that between the various ceremonies and gatherings, the wedding had occupied four weekends: during the first, gift-giving parties were held, in which the friends of the bride and bridegroom arrived with useful presents for the couple's everyday life; the civil marriage took place on the second weekend, on the third the Umbanda wedding, and lastly, the catholic ceremony.

It is interesting to note that during the catholic ceremony, as the priest addressed the young couple, he emphasized the virtues of the bride, making his own influence on her education quite clear. I don't know to what extent he had decided to ignore her connection with Umbanda. The bridegroom's suit and yellow tie, I was told, were the same he had worn at the Umbanda ceremony.

When I showed my curiosity as to how the bridegroom had begun attending Umbanda rituals, I was told that as the youngest son of parents who already had three children, he went through a period of maladjustment during adolescence: he didn't have the energy to continue with his studies, or to take on a regular job. He spent most of his time at home, doing nothing, exasperating his parents. Recourse to doctors and psychologists was to no avail, until someone suggested that they took the boy to an Umbanda temple.

The boy gradually recovered his gaiety, got a job in a manufacturing firm and, at the same time, occasional roles in TV advertisements. An obviously important factor is that it was at the Umbanda rituals that the boy met his wife to be.

A year after the wedding, I learnt that the young couple spent alternate weekends with his family and with hers. As a friend of his family, I am witness to the fact that their daughter-in-law was completely accepted by his parents, sisters-in-law, mother's in-laws and all his other relatives.

B) Cunha, July 1984

We arrived at Cunha on Tuesday the 10th, at around 6:00 p.m. We had intended to arrive earlier but had had to turn back because we'd forgotten the wedding present for the daughter of *Senhor* José Veloso. In order to collect the present we wasted around an hour and a half.

*Senhor* José Veloso, or more precisely José de Oliveira Veloso, is a *mulato* whom I have known since childhood. He was also in the same class as my older sister at the Dr. Alfredo Casemiro Rocha<sup>20</sup> grammar school. I remember his father Marcolino de Oliveira Veloso, *mulato ventre-livre*<sup>21</sup> an illegitimate son of Benedito de Oliveira Veloso with a slave.

Mr Veloso is nearly 70 and has children from two marriages. His first marriage was to a white woman, a granddaughter of Italians, and great-niece of Mr Neco Fornitani. (One of the latter's daughters, Olga, was a classmate of my sister, and one of the sons, Luiz or Lulu, was a classmate of mine). Mr Veloso's second marriage was to a *mulata*. He had two daughters and two sons with each of his wives, making a total of eight children.

The family is known locally as exceptionally hard-working. At home, the father makes savoury snacks and sweets that are sold at his cafeteria in the city's downtown area or are ordered directly by customers; his sons and daughters help him with the work. Once, when I'd met him a few years before, he had just been commissioned to make thousands of rice cakes to be distributed on the eve of the Feast of the Holy Spirit. On religious feast days he is seen playing his bass as a member of the local music band. A lady who once saw him playing in a procession under

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20 Editor's note: The last book that Nogueira published while he was alive is a biography of Dr. Alfredo Casemiro da Rocha, a mixture of historical and romanticized recollections, entitled *Negro Político. Político negro*. São Paulo: Edusp, 1992.

21 Editor's Note: The *Lei do ventre livre* [Law of the free womb], September 28, 1871, declared that the children of a slave born from that date on were free.

heavy rain asked him whether he wouldn't catch a cold, and he replied that "Nothing happens when we do something with love."

Two or three of his daughters usually work at the snack bar – the oldest daughter, who is overweight, around 40, and the younger daughter, thinner, of around 30, as well as another one of about 20; all three are *mulatas*. When it's required, or when they are able to, one of the brothers also comes to help. On various occasions I have met João there, kneading dough and frying pasties, pies or chicken dumplings.

When I taught in Itapetininga, in the 1970s, I had great admiration for a Japanese family whose daughter, a university professor, and son, a student at the University of São Paulo Polytechnic School, came to help their parents on their stall in the local fair at weekends.

The Veloso family is sort of a Brazilian equivalent of this immigrant Japanese family.

João Veloso, whom I've seen so many times working in the snack bar, had been approved at an state civil service entrance examination as an English teacher, and also worked at the local school and has even translated a book. In addition, he is the founder and director of the Cunha Centre for Culture and Tradition, and as such, as well as collecting and looking after objects and documents related to the history and culture of the municipality, he writes documents and chronicles which are then mimeographed and distributed in Cunha.

João is a *mulato escuro*, although for some of his friends he looks like an Indian. On weekends and holidays, he and Pedro, another of Mr Veloso's sons, look after the swimming pool that is used by fee-paying customers, which affords them a little extra money. On the same property, also at weekends and on public holidays, they open in the evenings their 'pizzeria' in a thatched cabin, built with extraordinary good taste. Pedro is the whiter brother, who dedicates his time to painting and to the study of art at a teaching institute in the town.

Every time that I've been to the pizzeria I have seen Pedro standing over the fire making delicious pizzas, that are praised even by local wealthy Italian immigrants.

Recently, the family acquired a small farm, 16 kilometres from the town, where they are planting, among other things, a fruit orchard and other crops, and are reforesting the land with pine trees. João went to Campos



do Jordão to learn how to breed trout, as he also plans to engage in trout farming. He hopes that within five years the farm will release them at least from having to run the pizzeria.

The Veloso family brings to mind the words of Roger (1971) about the tendency of upwardly mobile *famílias negras* [black families] to develop a certain degree of Puritanism, valuing work and austerity as a means of dignifying the family's self-appreciation.<sup>22</sup>

His daughter was going to get married on Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup>. So, on July 11, 1984, at 7:30 p.m., we went to visit Mr José Veloso to deliver our wedding gift.

In the morning, we had already met João, who had told us that his father had been ill, in a diabetic coma, and had just come back home from the hospital.

The house is in a meandering dirt road, narrow and steep, that begins with a Methodist Church. (...). When we finally arrived at the house, the daughter who was to be married was coming out. She apologised to us and explained that she had to leave for a while and would soon be back.

The house is below street level, so that one has to go down three flights of steps, with about 10 steps in each, to reach the front door. The steps lead down to an area of about 10 by 4 metres, overlooked by a window and the door.

The oldest daughter, who looks after the snack bar, showed us into the living room, where her father was resting in an armchair with two *mulato* gentlemen at his side. In the living room there was a table, two armchairs, half a dozen chairs and a colour television set. A number of girls, all *mulatinhas escuras*, came in and out, some of them greeting us while others just looked at us shyly; we did not know if they were daughters, nieces or other relatives of Mr Veloso. He apologised for not getting up and regretted being so ill at a time when he needed to do everything he could to organise his daughter's wedding.

In response to a question of mine he told me that he had eight living children – four girls and four boys – and that a further eight had died. Those who are still alive are the offspring from two different marriages.

Shortly after we arrived a young lady entered, *pele alva* [white skin] and typically European looking, accompanied by four children of 9 and under,

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22 For analogous observations on middle class black people in Campinas, see Barbosa (1983).

who were also white, and one of them had a freckled face. She kissed the old man fondly and did the same with his oldest daughter. She explained that she was a relative – I don't know whether a sister or a niece of Veloso's first wife.

While the children were playing in the garden – including my granddaughter and her friend – a young lady began to talk to my wife. She was the daughter of Mr Neco Fornotani, a tinker I had met when I was a child. Thus she is a granddaughter of Italians and a sister of Dona Mariquita Santana, Benedito de Aguiar Santana's widow. Benedito was a grandson of Major Santana, and was a childhood friend of mine. When I moved away from the town,<sup>23</sup> he had already entered the seminary but was never ordained as a priest. He ended up studying law and working as a lawyer in São Paulo. He died shortly after building a house in a small farm, in Cunha, where his widow now lives.

We had already visited this house a number of times, as my wife used to bring printed material for Dona Mariquita, for her religious activities. Recently she had begun to drop the material off at her sister's house in the *Largo da Matriz*. This sister was precisely the lady we had just met and who told us that she was a 1st and 2nd grade teacher, but due to poor health she was now retired. She was overweight as a consequence of her illness.

Dona Mariquita is also a retired teacher and a 'sister of the Eucharist', collaborating in the activities of the local Catholic church as well as in those of other Catholic churches in the municipality. She has a son who is a journalist in São Paulo, a daughter who is married and lives in Rio Grande do Sul and another unmarried daughter who lives with her. It took me some time to notice that Dona Mariquita's sister calls her brother-in-law José Veloso 'Uncle', as he is much older than she.

About five years ago, before we had bought our own house in Cunha, we went to a barbecue in the atelier of the ceramic artist Cidraes, invited by the brothers João and Pedro Veloso. A number of white girls were also there and the brothers told us that we were meeting some of their white relatives.

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23 Editor's note: Oracy Nogueira was born in Cunha (SP), on November 17, 1917, and lived there until he was 10, when the family moved to Catanduva, then to Botucatu, and later to the city of São Paulo. It was there that, in 1940, Nogueira started the Baccalaureate course at the Free School of Sociology and Politics, in 1942, going on to study for his Master's degree at the Graduate Studies Division under the tutoring of Donald Pierson.

I asked Mr Veloso if he had ever lived outside Cunha, and he told me that he had lived in São Paulo and in Taubaté. He had worked as an employee of the Cunha Town Council, in the State Department of Roads and Transport and at a bakery, until he managed to set himself up on his own, in his home town, as a baker and vegetable seller, with his snack bar as a retail outlet.

He returned to Cunha when his children had grown up and needed to study: “It required a great deal of sacrifice to get my children through school. I even worked in three places at the same time: the Town Council, in the bakery and as a self-employed baker. I used to sleep four hours a night!”

The house is rustic although made of brick. Its irregular shaped living room looks more like a trapezium than a rectangle. At a certain point Mr Veloso exclaimed: “On Saturday (the day of the wedding) you’ll meet all my relatives together!”

While we were there, a 70-year-old lady arrived, a *mulata escura e esbelta* [dark, slender mulato woman], whom Mr Veloso introduced to us as his sister. When he told her who I was, she remembered my parents, who had been teachers at the Dr. Alfredo Casimiro da Rocha Grammar School before 1930. She left before us; later, as we were going to Jorge Prudente’s house, at around nine p.m., we saw her crossing the Coronel João Olímpio Square on foot.

On Saturday the 14th, at 11 a.m., we arrived at the wedding in the city’s Central Church.

There were between 200 and 230 people in the church, most of whom were *mulatos* of varying shades with different combinations of African and European features. I noticed a very *preto* young man and a lady of a similar colour standing at separate locations.

Everyone was extremely smartly dressed, with the appearance of middle or upper-class people. There was a young woman with oriental features whose hair was arranged with combs, forming a bun. She arrived and sat down on a bench beside five young *mulatos*.

On most of the benches – I counted 32 of them – the composition of the occupants varied a lot, with *mulatos* of different shades and whites.

When the recording of the wedding march began the procession entered, led by a little blonde girl, with white skin and a pink face, about four years old, a daughter of the sister-in-law whom we had met at Mr Veloso’s house.

Pedro came ahead of them with a camera to take pictures of the various moments of the ceremony.

The bride entered on her father's arm. He was wearing a dark suit, but no tie, and walking bowlegged, clearly unwell, which made the scene even more moving. The bride was wearing a veil and tiara, with a long dress as in traditional weddings.

When we sat down, we found ourselves next to a slender gentleman with grey hair and white skin, of around 70, whom I imagined to be an Italian or a descendant of Italians. When we began talking to him he told me that he was German and had come to Brazil when he was 12. He had lived in Paraná and had come to Cunha a few years before. He told me that he had a tremendous wish to visit Germany, where his mother had died "exactly on the last Happy Night" (Christmas Eve), but that he couldn't afford the fare.

I saw the daughter of the town's Mayor in the church; she was a daughter of *Senhor* Benedito Fornitano. I also saw D. Lolinha Moreira Querido and various other members of the local white elite.

At the end of the ceremony I was able to observe the groups of family members, best men and bridesmaids. Most of them were *mulato*, with a few whites amongst them. The groom was a bald *mulato* who looked as if he was from Brazil's north-east, and in his family group there was a middle-aged couple holding hands – he, a blond, or red haired man, who had a reddish skin, looking like a German; and she, a *mulato*.

When we greeted the groom, who lived in Guaratinguetá as informed in the invitation, he told us that he indeed did live there but was hoping to come and live in Cunha as soon as possible. Both he and the bride appeared to be around 30. She is *mulata*, of a similar colour to her brother João.

At 3 p.m. I noticed cars arriving and people chatting merrily at the pizzeria, in the area near our house. I believe that a more restricted wedding reception was held there for a smaller number of people than those who had attended the religious ceremony.

### A priest's anniversary

On a Saturday in June 1984, I was happy to attend a gathering in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of Reverend Canon Enzo Guzzo's priesthood, at Santa Cruz High School. Reverend Enzo is a Professor at the Catholic University of São Paulo, and has been in the 1960's

the mentor of the Catholic University Youth (JUC. *Juventude Católica Universitária*).

Due to his great achievements as Professor at the university and mentor of JUC, Father Enzo had obtained considerable esteem from his ex-students, very many of whom had been persecuted following the military coup of 1964 and have since gained political prominence after the Amnesty of 1979 and the elections of 1982.

Father Enzo himself was persecuted and marginalised in the years following the 1964 military coup. Thus this tribute, as well as celebrating his long career as a priest, was also a way of compensating the wrongs and misunderstandings to which he had been subjected.

After the mass there was a cocktail. Leading state and municipal authorities and well-known intellectuals were present, as well as members of their families, friends and ex-students of Father Enzo.

I calculated the number of people present at 200, among whom I counted 30 with *negroide* features, including 2 who held top positions in the State government, and 5 *orientais*. I didn't see a single *preto*. The group with *negroide* features, then, constituted 15%; the number of whites present, 82.5%, and the *orientais* 2.5%.

Visit to a *preta* [black woman] supposedly one-hundred years old

On a Friday in June, 1984, in Cunha, at three in the afternoon I went to Chicão's house, so that, as we had agreed, he would take me to interview a *preta velha* [an old black lady] in the district of Boa Vista. For some time he had been telling me about this woman who, according to her grandson, was over a hundred years old. He even thought she could be 105 years old.

When we arrived at Boa Vista we went to the house of the caretaker of the São José Church (sometimes referred to as the Holy Family Church), where we were received by the caretaker's wife, a *morena* middle-aged woman, who appeared to me to have indigenous features, chubby, with a young face and very fine teeth. Afterwards Chicão told me that she was the great-niece of *Senhor* Pedro Prudente from Espírito Santo state, a farmer whom I know. At the side, cleaning the house and then the front terrace, there was a girl, also *morena*, of around 25, probably her daughter.

Chicão asked the caretaker's wife where *Dona* Tertulina's house was. When I asked her how old the *preta* was she thought I had asked her own age

and replied “43”. When I asked the question again she said that she imagined that the *preta* was about 90. The house was further down at the end of a narrow path, about two kilometres away. She suggested that we should walk because it would be very difficult to come back up by car. Chicão thought that it would be better to go as far as we could in his VW. And it was in this way that we arrived at the beginning of the woodlands that climb up the mountain that overhangs the path. At this point, on the left, there was a wooden entrance sided by the barbed wire. Chicão stopped the car and we entered on foot. After a hundred metres or so we reached a small plot where there was a wattle hut with a tiled roof. Outside the house a 60-year-old *preto* man was weaving a pannier, with five or more already finished beside him on the ground. There was a *preta* with *cabelo pixaim* [crinkly black hair] working near some trees. Ducks and chickens were foraging near the back-yard that sloped up the hill towards the church.

While we were still at a good distance away, Chicão began to shout, requesting permission for us to enter, to which the man and the woman replied: “Of course! We are pleased to welcome you!”

A woman came out of the house. She was obviously much older than the other. Both of them were barefoot with dishevelled hair; the man was wearing rubber boots. With Chicão’s help I explained that I was interested in speaking to old people, to get an idea of what life used to be like in Cunha. The man and the woman interrupted their work and invited us to come in.

The house belonged to the older woman and to a brother who was ill, and for this reason remained in the bedroom. The woman who received us (who was 73) said that she was the sister-in-law of the house’s owners and the aunt of the man who was weaving the panniers.

The latter told us that his name was José Benedito Ferreira and that he was 64. He lived with his wife and 10 children, in Barra, 35 kilometres from Boa Vista, but still in the municipality of Cunha, near the border with Paraty and Angra dos Reis, where he had a small farm with three *alqueires* of land. His oldest son was 30, and the youngest 6. He told us proudly that his oldest son doesn’t drink, gamble, or smoke and doesn’t take part in any quarrel. He only leaves the house to buy something if his father is unable to go.

I asked about his other children, to which he replied that all were the same, orderly and responsible. When I asked him how he could afford to

bring them up and he replied: “By working. Each one doing his bit.” And then he added: “Hard work never harmed anyone.”

He and his aunt spent part of their time in Barra and part in Boa Vista, helping the families at both sites. In Boa Vista they plant corn, beans and potatoes, as well as owning a few goats. They travel between the two districts about every two weeks.

To make the panniers, *Senhor* Benedito cuts the bamboo [*taquara*] in the nearby forest and leaves it outside for a day. He makes two a day, depending on how many orders he has. At this time of year people need the panniers to transport beans and corn on the backs of animals. He sells them for 5 or 6 thousand *cruzeiros* each.

He told us that he could not read because when he was a boy, in the countryside where he was born, near to the town of Campos Novos, there were no schools and private teachers were very expensive. His father was “weak”, in other words poor, and couldn’t afford to pay. But all his own children have been to school and learnt a little, “enough to get by”.

Inside the house, there was a small rustic table and two long benches along the outside wall. On the right there was a wood-burning stove alight.

Chicão sat down on the lowest bench, while I sat on the highest; *Senhor* Benedito sat on a three-legged stool and the women remained standing, the oldest leaning against the table. While we chatted, the owner’s sister-in-law put water in the kettle on the stove to boil in order to make us coffee, but as she went to get the cups out of a small cupboard beside the table, Chicão asked her not to go to the trouble as we’d had some coffee “just now” before leaving his house. We thanked her and said that on a future occasion we would be happy to accept.

The oldest woman told us that her name was Tertulina Correia de Siqueira and that she’d been born in the district of Conselho, in Campos Novos, where she lived until a few years after her parents died. Her parents had 12 children of whom five were men and seven women. “All of them have died. All of them are gone. Only Antonio (72), who is here, is still alive.”

She did not recall having ever known anyone who had been a slave.

She was the third child, with two older sisters. She lost her father or mother “in the same summer”, the father first and then, a month later, the mother. They both died of smallpox. She had to bring up her younger brothers and sisters and has never married.

She knew nothing about the owner of the land where her father worked. Her mother, her brothers and sisters as well as herself, all worked on the land, planting corn, beans and potatoes.

I asked if she remembered Dr. Rocha. She replied: “Yes, he was a *preto* doctor who once cured my father who is now dead.”

She remembered the Feasts of the Holy Spirit, of St Anthony and of St John. She said that she had never learned to read, giving the same reasons as *Senhor* Benedito had.

Her father’s name was Calisto de Siqueira, and her mother’s, Cristina. Chicão thinks that she descends from slaves who belonged to the Siqueira family, as is the case of Canon Siqueira.

She told a story about Dr. Rocha. Once a child was taken to be baptised, but the priest had refused to do it. The parents said that if the child would die as a pagan the priest would be the one to blame. This is probably the same case I had heard before about the priest who refused to baptise a child whose godfather was to be Dr. Rocha, because the doctor was a freemason. She didn’t know the name of the priest.

She couldn’t tell us the year of her birth. She only repeated several times that she was “almost a hundred years old”, at which her brother shouted out from the back of the house: “She’s 85!”

The house where they live and the land where they plant are in the parish of São José. According to Chicão, the 70 *alqueires* were donated by a farmer called Porto many years ago, and the brother and the sister, with the aid of Benedito and their aunt, look after the property. I asked them if they were obliged to give a part of their production to the priest at the parish, to which *Senhor* Benedito said no. They help the priest every year at the Feast of São José. Recently, Father Mauro got everyone together to clear the land where the animals donated for the Feast were to graze, and they had gone to help. *Senhor* Benedito praised the priest who had worked the whole day at their side with a scythe.

Chicão explained that, in the municipality, all the small farmers prefer to plant corn, as it provides food for the horses, chickens, pigs as well as for the family themselves; and corn, even when affected by dry rot, can be kept from one year to another. They plant less beans because they spoil easily if they are not sold immediately after the harvest. Of the rest they plant a little



of everything – potatoes, peanuts (beneath the table in the living room there was a basketful of these), pumpkins and fruit.

The important thing is to plant little and to take care of it well. He gave an example of one of his brothers, Neco Carminho, who planted a lot, but only cleared the land and was not able to harvest it all. He thus ended up harvesting less than 10% of what he'd planted. This was when *Senhor Benedito* said for the first time “Hard work never harmed anyone.”

Chicão joked: “You have the best boss in the world – São José”. To which *Senhor Benedito* replied, with a look of contrition, “And we need to give him a great deal of attention.”

## Mournful Situations

### A) Funeral for a University Professor

In July 1984, the economist and sociologist Vicente Unzer de Almeida died in São Paulo. He graduated in Social Sciences from the Faculty of Sociology and Politics [Escola Livre de Sociologia e Política], in Legal Sciences from the Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC) and had graduate degrees in Economics from Vanderbilt and Chicago Universities.

Apart from having worked in government posts and in a private company, Vicente Unzer de Almeida had taught for many years on the Social Sciences course at the Faculty of Sociology and Politics, as well as at the São Luís Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences in the capital, and at the Valeparaibana Teaching Foundation in São José dos Campos. In recent years he continued to teach at the Economic and Administrative Sciences Department of the Armando Álvares Penteado Foundation in São Paulo and in Osasco and at the School of Journalism at the Casper Líbero Foundation, also in São Paulo.

The dead man had been my close and loyal friend for more than 50 years. Our friendship began at high school in the hinterlands, when we were colleagues on the undergraduate course of Social Sciences at the Faculty of Sociology and Politics, in São Paulo. We always discussed our studies and projects, confident in the sincerity of each other's criticism. Although we were different in temperament and philosophy of life, we had great mutual respect, and were a source of doubt and self-criticism to one another - *ego* and *alter ego*. Thus it was with consternation and complete sincerity that

I participated in the tributes that followed his death, and it is not without some resistance that I describe it here.

At the wake, which took place at the Getsêmane Cemetery, I calculated that about 50 people were present, including the dead man's family, relatives, colleagues and friends, who, in terms of colour, were distributed in the following way: Whites – 84% (42); *Mulatos* 12% (6); *Pretos* 4% (2); *Orientais* (0).

It is a curious fact that the distribution of whites, *mulatos* and *pretos* corresponds very closely to their proportion in the population of São Paulo.

The two *pretos* present belonged to the family of a woman of the same colour who had been brought up by the dead man's mother-in-law.

Among the *mulatos* present one was an old friend of the family, who enjoyed a very good standard of living and was married to a white woman who accompanied him; another, the priest who conducted the funeral, a man of around 65; and an adolescent whose posture and appearance indicated that he was also a person with a privileged standard of living.

## B) Tribute at the University

One evening in September 1984, I fulfilled my duty by attending a tribute to Professor Vicente Unzer de Almeida at the School of Economics and Administrative Sciences of Osasco, which is sponsored by an educational foundation of the municipality.

There were speeches and the Villa Lobos Conservatory Youth Orchestra played symphonic pieces (the orchestra is also funded by the Technological Institute of Osasco).

The ceremony took place in a large, semi-open space, with the orchestra at the front, facing the public. Most of the assistants sat in chairs arranged in rows for the audience. Close to the orchestra and to the point where the speakers would stand there were three rows of chairs reserved for the more important guests (close family, government authorities and colleagues of the deceased). This group was formed of about 30 people, and included the mayor, town councillors and municipal secretaries as well as directors of the Foundation. Among them I counted five *mulatos* including one who was *escuro* [dark], among them two of the main orators at the event.

Apart from the young conductor, who looked Italian, the orchestra had 26 players whose names were given in the programme. Among them I counted 7 *mulatos* and 2 *pretos*.

Besides the people who were seated, there were numerous others who were standing at both sides of the room.

I calculated that there were around 400 people present, among whom I counted 9 *pretos*, 5 *orientais*, around 100 *mulatos* (accounting for a quarter of all those present). According to categories of colour they were distributed as follows: Whites – 71.50% (286); *Mulatos* – 25% (100); *Pretos* – 2.25% (9); *Orientais* – 1.25% (5).

The relatively high number of *mulatos* can perhaps be explained by the composition of Osasco's population, one of the largest industrial complexes in Greater São Paulo, with an overwhelming presence of factory workers.

### C) Visit of commiserations

In recent years, I met a nice couple, even though I didn't get to know them well. The husband was white from a traditional family, the grandson of coffee planters and the son of a leading industrialist, who had been a leader in his respective economic sector a few decades ago. The man was a small businessman who had a reasonably good standard of living, although he no longer enjoyed the wealth that he had known in his childhood and youth. He was around 60 years old and lived in one of the large houses that his father had built to leave to his children, in one of the most wealthy residential districts of São Paulo.

His wife, who is about five years younger than him, also came from a wealthy family. She was born in Europe while her parents were living there. An intelligent, elegant and attractive woman, and I immediately observed that she might have some African ancestry, though remote,

In the middle of 1984, her husband died, and given the respect I had for him, I decided to make a visit to offer my condolences to his widow. When I arrived, on a Sunday afternoon, I was received in the living room where, beside the widow, there were two couples, as well as a lady and an adolescent.

One of the couples was composed of a *moreno* between 45 and 50, and a very white woman about 10 years younger. The other was made up of a

man of about 35, *mulato*, as could be clearly seen from his skin, hair and nose, and a white woman about five years younger.

I soon discovered that the middle-aged lady was the sister of the deceased and that the adolescent, at the time studying business administration, was his nephew; however, during the confusion of the introductions, I did not catch on to the connections between the other people present and the deceased and his widow. A short time later, however, the conversation became more animated and I found out that the older man was a lawyer who had studied at the Largo de São Francisco Law School and was now a bank manager, and that his wife was a librarian. His friendship with the family had begun when he was a fellow student of the oldest son of the deceased (the business administration student's father) at the Law School. Soon after this son arrived; he was about 45 years old and looked very much like his father.

The 35-year-old *mulato* man was also a lawyer who had graduated from the same Law School, but was now in advertising, working directly for companies rather than at an agency. As the conversation continued, he gave me the impression of being intelligent and erudite, and also appeared to be a good classical linguist. In short, he was a versatile, well-informed man of exceptional intellectual vivacity. His wife was a graduate in literature and showed an interest in semiotics.

On the way out I discreetly asked the widow who the man whose was conversation was so interesting was, to which she replied, bursting with pride: "My son!"<sup>24</sup>

## 5. Final comments

### Antonil's metaphor

The studies and available data show that, at the present time, whites, *mulatos* and *pretos* in Brazilian society occupy the same place as their predecessors did in the Colony and in the Empire. The first enjoy the most favourable socio-cultural and economic conditions, control the means of

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24 Editor's Note: Section 5 of the original text, called "Diverse situations and events", in which Nogueira reported 9 events - "Visit to a ceramist"; "In a beer bar"; "Inauguration of a Brazilian Pacifist Movement"; "Inauguration of a fashion shop"; "Visit to a painter"; "Political rally for direct elections"; "Charismatic Mass"; "Manifestations of 1st and 2nd grade students on the subject of race relations"; "Conversations in a barbershop"- was excluded.

production, exercise the best-paid professions and have the most prestige; the second have an intermediary place, at a considerable distance, however, from both whites and *pretos*. The latter group are in a far more precarious position, far worse than that of the *mulatos*. In other words, the European phenotype continues to correspond to the most desirable socio-economic conditions, the African to the least desirable, and the different nuances of the combination of *preto* and white are distributed along a *continuum*. The somatic features, specially the skin colour, but also the characteristics of the nose, lips and hair, have been reified and were transformed into symbols of social status. This way of classifying people configures what I've called the prejudice of mark that tends to shun rather than exclude or unconditionally segregate those with *negroide* features (Nogueira, 1955 and 1985).<sup>25</sup> Brazilian society is multi-segmented according to the criteria of racial appearance, rather than divided into two separate groups, with the predominance of those with exclusively Caucasian ancestry, as is the case in North America. The metaphor coined by the Jesuit Andreoni (whose *nom de plume* was Antonil)<sup>26</sup> to describe colonial society in the 18th-century could be altered in the following way to describe Brazilian society in the 20th: "Brazil is a paradise for the white man, a purgatory for the *mulato* and a hell for the *pretos*." In the original metaphor the Jesuit considered Brazil "a paradise for *mulatos* and a purgatory for whites," as he also understood the difficulties of the latter group, despite their privileges.

Given the association of dark colour with situations of "opprobrium", to quote the word adopted by Guerreiros Ramos,<sup>27</sup> a certain prudence surrounds the mention of the dark colour, so that those who are themselves darker in colour often avoid mentioning their colour, preferring euphemism

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25 Editor's note: The date 1955 refers to the "Relatório das Relações raciais no município de Itapetininga", which was part of the UNESCO research into racial relations carried out between 1952 and 1954. It was originally published along with the results of the other research work carried out in São Paulo, in a book organized by Roger Bastide and Florestan Fernandes. A revised version was published separately in book form, organized by this editor, under the title *Preconceito de Marca. As relações raciais em Itapetininga*, by the Editora da Universidade de São Paulo (Edusp) em 1998.

26 Editor's note: João Antonio Andreoni, an Italian Jesuit, who wrote his book *Cultura e Oportunidade do Brasil* under the name of André João Antonil. The work is considered the best record of the Portuguese colony at the beginning of the 18th century. It was published in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1711. The 1922 Brazilian edition, with a bio-bibliographic study by Affonso Taunay, was reissued in 1982 by Ed. Itatiaia (Belo Horizonte) and Edusp (São Paulo), and is now in the public domain.

27 The sociologist Guerreiro Ramos (1915-1982) was Oracy Nogueira's personal friend. For an evaluation of his work, see Oliveira, Lucia Lippi, *Sociologia do Guerreiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. UFRJ, 1995.

or even silence. Meanwhile, other members of the conversation also avoid saying anything explicit so as not to provoke susceptibilities, except in situations of conflict.

### Pretos and mulatos at the University of São Paulo

A commentary in the press on the scarcity of *pretos* and *mulatos* on the teaching staff at the University of São Paulo and at the Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC) was the spark that ignited my curiosity and led to my undertaking the research for this article.

By its very nature, the University of São Paulo has to be highly selective in the admission of students and teachers; both positions have considerable prestige, creating demand that is unequalled by any other national institution of a similar nature. Nevertheless, our participant observation for more than 30 years, and the data that I collected during a year of systematic observation, although incomplete, shows that it is rare, if not impossible, for an academic event at the University of São Paulo – whether a lecture, entrance exam or ceremony – not to include the presence of *mulatos* on the teaching staff, or as candidates, students or spectators.

In the Departments of Economics and Social Sciences, the two departments where I was able to identify the presence of *mulatos* on the teaching staff, they represented 2 to 3% and 4 to 5% respectively. In both cases there were no *pretos* on the teaching staff. (...) There is the single exception, that of an African who collaborates as a Professor and research with the Graduate Program.

Considering that *mulatos* make up at least 18.5% of the population of the State of São Paulo, and *pretos* 4.6%, (figures which refer only to those that declared themselves as such in the 1980 census), one can get an idea of the degree of underrepresentation of both these groups.

It will be noted that *orientais* (Japanese, Koreans and Chinese), who make up 1.9% of the population of the State, according to the same census, represented the same proportion as *mulatos* in the Economics Department, and a considerably lower proportion in the Department of Social Sciences.

Knowing as I do the way that the entrance exams for students and teachers have been carried out at the University for many years now, I do not believe that racial discrimination *per se* can explain the proportions by which these groups are represented.

The underrepresentation of *mulatos* and *pretos* is primarily due to a process of socio-economic filtering: the requirement to start working young in order to support the family; a home life that doesn't motivate or prepare children to stay within the education system, and the lack of financial capacity on the part of the parents to provide formal education for their children, enabling them to complete the courses that would motivate them.

Families, whatever the colour of their members, tend to imbue their children, both formally and informally, with aspirations for an education and career that are compatible with their resources.

Apart from unequal opportunities of access to the basic schooling system – preschool, primary and secondary schools – discrimination is also likely to substantially affect the destiny of non-white students (as well as that of poor students, as one of the consequences of their poverty) through the expectations of their teachers, most of whom are from the middle class and imbued with its values, tending to encourage students that are more aligned with their own expectations, that is, whose attitudes, behaviour and skills appear to them to be the most promising. Thus candidates for a place as a student, and later on, possibly, as a teacher, arrive at the University gates already having been filtered by all the circumstances listed above.

Furthermore, candidates for a place as a student tend to choose institutions and courses that match their aspirations to what is practically possible for them. In the case of *orientais*, who, unlike the *mulatos* and the *pretos*, are overrepresented among the students and teachers at the University, the explanation would appear to be the material and psychological support they receive from their families. Consequently, their higher aspirations lead them to concentrate on courses that prepare them for professions of greater prestige or that are more economically rewarding, above all engineering and medicine. Considering the Human Sciences, this would explain the greater concentration of this group in the Economics Department rather than in the Social Sciences Department.

*Pretos* and *mulatos*, as well as other candidates from less privileged social classes, tend to opt for courses that require less expensive preparation and are suitable for the individual who intends to pursue a career that will provide him or her with an adequate income.

The purpose of these reflections is to promote a greater awareness that discrimination *per se* is not responsible for the underrepresentation of *pretos* and *mulatos* among the teaching staff or among the students at USP and other similar institutions. It is important not to underestimate the barriers that those who succeed in getting a place inside these institutions have had to overcome.

Once the barrier of the entrance exam has been overcome, and if after that he manages to be admitted as a Professor, the career of a *mulato* will depend basically on his personal merit and on his capacity for making the best of the opportunities that arise.

In the sectors of the University that I know best there are *mulatos* who are held to be the most skilled among their colleagues. It is not unusual to find them in positions of command, both at the university and in research institutes or centres, with a wide reputation outside the University as professionals, technocrats or politicians.

I have not mentioned *pretos* in the comments made above due to the rarity and virtual nonexistence of representatives of this group on the teaching staff of USP. However, the case of Professor Antonio Cesarino Júnior, the retired Full Professor of the Law School, should be mentioned. He has been a highly regarded teacher and professional who founded the Labour Law department at the Law School.

### Mulatos and pretos in situations and events outside the University of São Paulo

In the situations and events outside the University of São Paulo described in this article, even those for the most privileged classes, there were always *mulatos* present, even though underrepresented in relation to their proportion of the population as a whole. Pretos were not entirely absent; this does not mean, however, that prejudice and discrimination don't exist, but rather that they are expressed in Brazilian society by shunning rather than completely excluding these groups.

It is significant that most of the *mulatos* and *pretos* whom I observed at events such as weddings, funerals and others, were members of *casais mistos* [mixed couples] (in which one of the spouses was white), or of *famílias mistas* (in which some members are white and others non-white). It is also significant that in the conviviality observed with *casais mistos* or families



they do not consider themselves as such, and consequently are not seen as such by their circle of friends since their *mulato* members do not define themselves as such. Adding these cases to those of people with evident *negroide* features whose identification as whites never seems to be doubted, neither by themselves nor by their circle of relations, we can admit that the definition of “white” in Brazil is analogous to the definition of “*negro*” in the United States: “Every individual who is recognised as such by his community is white.”

The first wedding described in this article, that of a young man from a white family to a girl from a mixed one, has a number of relevant implications to this study: 1) the acceptance by family and friends of both the Umbanda and Catholic ceremonies (and thus of both the European and African legacies) is an example of convergence that frequently occurs in Brazilian society, and an eloquent one since the bridegroom arrived at the Catholic ceremony in the suit and tie that he had specially ordered in accordance with the symbology of the Umbanda rite; 2) the fact that the bride was a member of a *família mista* [mixed family] indicates the acceptance within the contingent of whites of someone who descends from a *família mista* [mixed family] whose phenotype had been depurated from *negroide* features; 3) the easiness with which this marriage was accepted by both families; and 4) the underlying tendency towards the individualisation of identification, which is characteristic of the Brazilian racial situation.

If in this case, and in the cases of the other *mistos* weddings described in this article, a certain negotiation between the two partners or the two families seems evident, it should be borne in mind that such an aspect is present in almost all, if not in all interactional situations. Human beings have a capacity for the refinement or sublimation of their own impulses, which results in their behaviour rising above the purely animal level. People who don't believe in such a capacity resort to the scepticism of La Rochefoucauld, who saw only egoism and crude calculation as the motivation for all human actions.

Equally significant was my contact with *negros* who evidently showed traces of what Roger Bastide calls “puritanism”, in the sense that they express the ethics of work and politeness as relevant aspects to success.

Even more significant was my observation of how, in middle-class circles, the *mulato* is very far from being an exotic or conspicuous outsider.

On the contrary, in the majority of situations he goes unnoticed. Who else, apart from this researcher, would have noticed, for example, that the priest who conducted the wake of the University Professor was *mulato*?

To conclude, let me say that I do not consider the reflections made in this article as “conclusions” of this research. They are rather associations and hypotheses engendered by the research, compatible with the situations and events I observed and with my knowledge of the racial situation in Brazil gleaned from other sources.

Cunha, March 10, 1985.

Oracy Nogueira

Tradução de Marcus Peter Carlyon

Revisão Técnica de Maria Laura Viveiros de Castro Cavalcanti

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