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Editor's Note

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Brazil is a vast and fascinating country: an area just over 3.25 million square miles of varied ecosystems, from deserts and *cerrados* to mountain ranges and extremely dense tropical vegetation; a population of 160 million, the sixth largest in the world; the tenth largest economy; and a spinning ontological vortex primarily born out of a combination of indigenous, African, and European races and cultures. These characteristics alone easily make Brazil an alluring site for rich intellectual and aesthetic encounters. Such an attraction becomes even more irresistible in this age of overheating modernity. This is a time when the order of both nature and society, as well as their relationships, are subject to intense pressures that are at once particular/local and universal/global. As a result, it is because of the inherent richness of Brazil and its importance in South America, coupled with the massive contemporary challenges that it confronts—perhaps an amplification of what, in some form or another, faces the rest of the hemisphere—that we settled on making Brazil the venue of our 1997 Faculty Development International Seminar. We were not disappointed.

We chose the theme, “Landscape, Culture, and Globalization,” for a number of reasons. *Landscape* provides us with a concept that immediately invokes the physical elements, structure, and bounty of the land, while simultaneously being suggestive of the accumulated imprints of human presence and impact. *Culture* affords a window on the movement of ideas, institutions, and action or “forms of life.” *Globalization*, as has been expressed on many occasions in the pages of this publication, triggers lively discussion on pressing contingencies often associated with an expansive hypermodernity that does not seem to spare any society.¹

There is little doubt that even the most fleeting of visitors cannot help but notice the achievements as well as enormous promise of the country. Blessed with diverse and almost cornucopic resources, striking human talent, including the best soccer played anywhere on earth, and new democratic practices, Brazil could be a country for the twenty-first century. But to get from here to a future commensurate with its potential, Brazil, as both Brazilian scholars and average citizens often reminded us, must

put up effective strategies to surmount considerable difficulties —some rather chronic, others relatively transient.

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Of Brazil's great attributes, none matches its ecological range and splendor. At the core of these extensive and manifold ecosystems is the majesty of the world's largest rain forest. While half of the country is covered by forest, it is primarily the Amazon Basin and the adjacent areas that have captured contemporary international attention. On the one hand, the Brazilian Amazon, big enough to nearly equal the size of Western Europe, is reputed to be the world's largest reservoir of plants and animal species. What is already known of this ecosystem has firmly underscored the pivotal role it plays in our planet's climate. Equally important, however, could be the still-hidden medicinal, nutritional, and further ecological worth of the Amazon belt that, in the eyes of scientists and environmentalists, calls for extraordinary protection and care. On the other hand, there is a distressing record of despoliation that is part of what Warren Dean, the distinguished environmental historian of Brazil, calls a "half-millennium of gluttony."² As I pen these notes, even more alarming evidence on the deteriorating state of the rain forest is pouring in.

Earlier this month, a separate study issued by a Congressional commission showed that 22,393 square miles of the Amazon were being destroyed each year through deforestation — which shows up on satellite images — as well as through logging, ground fires and thinning of previously virgin forest, which may occur undetected by satellites beneath the forest canopy. [Furthermore, t]he Woods Hole Research Institute, studying the same phenomenon, concluded last year that the Amazon is reaching an unprecedented level of dryness, raising the threat that rain forest could catch fire and burn out of control.³

While Brazil's natural world has become increasingly brittle, the economic circumstances bring their own stark juxtapositions.⁴ On the positive side, the strength of the country is impressive. First, endowed with abundant minerals such as iron

ore, manganese, bauxite, nickel, uranium, and oil, Brazil is a major center of productive activities to the tune of around \$600 billion in 1996. Second, the economy is relatively diversified among agriculture, industry, and service. Third, agricultural produce includes coffee, soybean, sugarcane, cocoa, rice, beef, corn, oranges, cotton, and wheat, while steel, petrochemicals, machinery, motor vehicles, consumer durables, rubber, and cement are among the major industrial products. Fourth, nearly 75 percent of the total population now lives in urban areas, particularly the industrial cities of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, and Salvador. Fifth, since 1994 an economic stabilization project (*Plano Real*, or Real Plan) has been in effect.⁵ Some consequences include a dramatic reduction in inflation rates — the tormentor of Brazil in the 1980s and early 1990s — from around 5,000 percent to less than 10 percent in 1997, the lowest in over four decades. Moreover, the plan underpins strong exchange rates, tight monetary policy, privatization, and a liberalization of trade. Sixth, as further reaction to the Real Plan, foreign investment jumped from \$1 billion in 1993 to \$15 billion in 1997. Seventh, trade with the outside world has doubled in the last six years to over \$100 billion. Finally, with an intelligent eye on the trading blocks, a feature of the world at the century's end, Brazil is a founding member of a new common market (Mercosul) that ties Brazil closer to Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay — a \$1 trillion market. When fully consummated, this arrangement should valorize Brazil's clout in trade negotiations with others, such as the United States and the European Union.

But there is another, more troubling side to the country's economic profile — the social condition of a large part, perhaps the vast majority, of its people. In the realm of land tenure, for instance, Brazil's richest 1 percent of landowners claim 44 percent of the arable land, of which 63 percent lies idle. In addition, over half the farmers eke out a living on less than 3 percent of the land. Rural life, then, is a thick condensation of economic power relations in Brazil and, as a result, intense and bloody battles for basic survival are taking place in many parts of the country.⁶

From the arid northeast to the fertile south, tens of thousands of Brazilians are claiming their right to settle unused land in their

country. Hundreds of millions of acres of rich soil lie untouched—the legacy of land grants awarded to the ruling class 400 years ago by the Portuguese kings. Leading families and business groups keep their estates as a hedge against inflation or as an investment, while rural workers toil in near feudal conditions or, cast off when jobs run out, wander the countryside.⁷

The hinterland is not alone in exhibiting the deep marks of maldevelopment and inequality. On the contrary, the quotidian woe of impoverishment pervades the urban areas too. In the megalopolis of São Paulo, for example, nearly a quarter of its population lives in slums. Similar conditions can be easily observed in other large cities.⁸ Perhaps most burdensome of all is the lot of many Brazilian children—16 million of them cast off, and out of every ten who die, seven have succumbed to hunger. This, in a country near the top (fourth, to be exact) of the premier league of the world's food exporters. In short, one of the world's most skewed income distributions and highest concentrations of productive assets have made Brazil into a society disfigured by a caustic polarization of class differentiation and uneven development.⁹

But if class domination is so conspicuous in the structuring of social life, an equally critical category is that of race. In general, White (i.e., European) Brazilians—no more than half of the population—are the privileged, having weighted access to the commanding heights of power and status. On the other hand, non-Whites continue to be severely limited by a political economy in which shades of “whiteness” are normally correlative with acceptance, opportunity, and success. Racism, then, is a phenomenon that has deep historical roots, constituting a very significant element of the *logos* of all social relations and encounters.

Founded on the twin processes of conquest and slavery, notwithstanding the *differentia specifica* of Portuguese colonization and racial attitudes, including heavy miscegenation, the greatest cost in the making of Brazil, much like the United States, was borne by the indigenous peoples and Africans.¹⁰ To respond to such negative history and its drag after *abolição* (abolition), Brazilians have put forth a few ideas, of which “racial democracy” is the most renown.¹¹ In a highly compressed fash-

ion, this thinking foregrounds a persistent claim of Brazilian uniqueness, of an exceptionalism that is predicated on a hybrid of racial topography undergirded by an everyday culture of conviviality and non-prejudice. Although one could observe commendable aspects of the doctrine, the wide gulf between the principle and the realities of Brazilian life has been persuasively articulated.¹²

Of all the 26 states and the federal district that make up the Federal Republic of Brazil, none speaks more to the combined grip of class and race than the state of Bahia. The oldest of Brazilian urban settlements, the population is predominantly Afro-Brazilian. Salvador, its capital, is home to over 2 million people, of whom more than 70 percent are Black. The statistics are eloquent. For instance, the mortality rate for Afro-Brazilians is 105 per thousand against 77 for Whites, while life expectancy is around 59 years and 66 years, respectively — malnutrition, tuberculosis, and malaria are the frequent killers. In the business sector, there are no Afro-Brazilians among the major accumulators or well-placed captains of industry. In addition, for the majority, high, chronic unemployment is a way of life. The same marginalization can be observed in the political system where less than 15 percent of the 40 members of the Bahian Congress are non-White and, even more revealing, the city of Salvador has never elected a non-White mayor. Finally, education is another area where one can discern the impact of stored up racial disempowerment. Over all, the state has a literacy rate of around 70 percent among the adult population, compared to 81 percent nationwide. Illiteracy is most pronounced in the Black population. At the Federal University of Bahia, non-Whites constitute less than 40 percent of the 25,000 students. Here, there are hardly any Blacks among the professionate and virtually no Afro-Brazilian-, African-, or diaspora-focused courses in the curriculum.

Despite its frequent assertion among some segments of the society, then, “racial democracy” in the eyes of many observers, is seen as an obfuscatory simulacra that, in the end, has two deleterious consequences:¹³ (a) a sequester of Afro-Brazilian and Native histories at the extreme margins only to be exhibited as folkloric adornments, and, worse, (b) a “whitening” of their communities and their memories out of existence. In either case,

the result is the same: the excision of a precious source of critical values for the society to imagine an alternate and more normative hermeneutic to interpret its heritage, as well as deal more effectively with the continuing monstrosities of racial domination and privilege.

To conclude these brief remarks, our faculty group went to Brazil expecting to come face to face with a country possessed of panoramic beauty, abundant resources, gregarious and intelligent people, and in the midst of many changes. All of these and more came true for us. But we also encountered a society faced with big challenges—the most immediate of which are the current thrust of a spreading contagion of global currency speculation and the turbulent moods of foreign investors.¹⁴ The main contours of our learning experience are told by the essays delivered by our Brazilian colleagues and the shorter pieces by the Macalester faculty who participated in the 1997 Faculty Development International Seminar.

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Joseph Love leads off our major essays. He maps for us the movement of ideas, or paradigms, about the central question of development, or, in Love's words, "the nation's daunting problems" among Brazilian thinkers. It is Love's main argument that the country's greatest difficulties have been and continue to be essentially socioeconomic. In that context, he takes note of the relationships between shifting global processes and Brazilian developmental thought, including that of Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

By choice a U.S. transplant to Brazil, **David Oren** writes about ecology and human existence in what could be the "richest biodiversity zone in the world." His essay focuses on the struggle over the environment by linking the fate of the ecosystems to the socioeconomic policies and political decisions.

José Luiz dos Santos takes issues with the theoretical value of the concept of globalization. He warns of the dangers of fixation on abstract, homogenizing, and transnational phenomenon at the cost of unique detailed understanding of specific historical structures and human agents.

Maria Lucia Caira Gitahy and **Francisco Foot Hardman** collaborate to convey the sharp contrasts that coexist in Brazil, particularly in its human ecology. They point to the limits of traditional social science concepts in the face of rich complexities. While their immediate concern is about the effects of neoliberal transnationalism, they end with the hope that, despite "exclusion and death," Brazilians can still use their hybrid context to create a post-colonial internationalist society.

Jeferson Bacelar offers a very compact overview of Blacks, or Africans, in Brazil, particularly in Bahia. He stresses two factors: the damnation that accompanies racial hierarchy, and the importance of cultural assertion as a form of resistance.

Finally, **Cyana Leahy-Dios's** thoughts are on education, specifically the dilemma of learning and teaching literature. She asks for the transformation of the curriculum and the creation of one that befits a multicultural society entering the twenty-first century.

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Macalester faculty reflections begin with **Toni Dorca**. He tells us that the experience touched his identity and rekindled in him images of his homeland — Spain. He writes about the consequences of Western triumph as well as *modernismo* in Brazil.

Peter Ferderer comments on the evolution of economic policies of Brazilian governments. He reviews and discusses the most recent changes associated with the greater insertion of both private and market mechanisms, i.e., liberalization. Ferderer informs us that Brazil is in the midst of a shift to a new "equilibrium."

Galo González is caught in the mood of "traveler poet" and, as a result, responds to the wonder of Brazil by composing a poem. He then proceeds to comment on Brazilian narrative production in the face of sharp existential concerns.

Leland Guyer uses a poem by Ferreira Gullar to speak of the "darker side" of globalization, e.g., migration, flight of refugees, and "forms of exile."

Teresita Martínez-Vergne glances back to retrieve what "lessons" the historical evolution of Brazil, particularly the turn of the twentieth century, can teach us. She connects together, by

way of comparative references, the social contradictions of Brazil and those of the Dominican Republic.

Michael Monahan's interest lies in the confluence of the study of nature and liberal arts education, especially study abroad. Nature, for him, is both an aesthetic-cum-spiritual experience and a biophysical context. He tells us about his journey into the depths of the rain forest and along the Amazon River.

Robert Morris is keen on the African impact, if any, on Brazilian musical compositions, particularly in Salvador. He regrets that Brazil's potential as a cultural power will always be hamstrung by the conscious neglect of its Black population.

Anthony Pinn spent most of this time thinking about the invention and practice of religion in the world of the Black Atlantic. For him, the exploration of the mutual shaping of socioeconomic and political forces, and belief and purpose are some of the most exciting memories of the experience.

Sonita Sarker's concerns lie in the use of gender and globalization as an aid to the comparative understanding of feminism. She weaves her meditation on globalization with the particularities of Brazil.

Gerald Webers and **John Craddock** touch on some contemporary social phenomena and then move on to report on their expedition to the Sierra de la Ventana region of Argentina. The evolution and effect of plate tectonics is the basis of their curiosity.

Notes

1. Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996); and John H. Dunning and Khalil A. Hamdani, eds., *The New Globalism and Developing Countries* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1997).
2. Warren Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand: The Destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). Dean concludes his passionate and imposing volume with this warning:

The irresponsible and spendthrift reduction of the Amazon Basin to bare ground has therefore given rise to international alarm and derision. Among those Brazilians who have studied the history of the Atlantic Forest and appreciate the presence of its remnant stands, the Amazon Forest inspires especial alarm and foreboding. The last service that the Atlantic Forest might serve, tragically and forlornly, is to demonstrate all the terrible consequences of destroying its immense western neighbor (364).

For an account that is both personal and ethnobotanic, see Mark J. Plotkin, *Tales of a Shaman's Apprentice* (New York: Viking, 1993).

3. Diana Jean Schemo, "Brazil Says Amazon Burning Tripled in Recent Years," *New York Times*, 27 January 1998, A3. Also, see her "To Fight Outlaws, Brazil Opens Rain Forest to Loggers," *New York Times*, 21 July 1997, A3.

4. Sylvia Ann Hewlett, *The Cruel Dilemmas of Development: Twentieth-Century Brazil* (New York: Basic Books, 1980); Warner Baer, *The Brazilian Economy*, 4th ed. (New York: Praeger, 1995); Victor Bulmar-Thomas, *The Economic History of Latin America since Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Graham Bird and Guillermo Perry, eds., *Latin America's Economic Future* (London: Academic Press, 1994); and Sebastian Edwards, "Latin American Economic Integration: A New Perspective on an Old Dream" in *The World Economy* 16, no. 3 (1993).

5. Some scholars suggest that these changes are part of larger economic reforms initiated in many Latin American countries in the past decade. The reasons cited as driving such shifts include the imperatives of (a) better fiscal discipline, (b) more competent tax collection, (c) scaling down of state expenditures, and (d) thinning of tariffs and non-tariff barriers, i.e., liberalization of trade. Graham Bird and Ann Elwage, "Can Neo-Liberalism Survive in Latin America?" in *Millennium* 26, no. 1 (1997).

6. Sebastião Salgado, *Terra: Struggles of the Landless* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997). This is a photojournalistic book dedicated to the plight and cause of the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST). The pictures capture both the desperation and courage of Brazil's landless as well as their massacre by the police in the state of Pará in 1996. This is photojournalism at its most riveting and sociologically instructive best. Also, Eduardo Galeano, *Memory of Fire*, trans. Cedric Belfrage, 1st America ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1985–1988).

7. Diana Jean Schemo, "The Dispossessed" in *New York Times Magazine*, 20 April 1997, 42; Howard LaFranchi, "Brazil's Landless Refuse To Be Voiceless As Well: Grass-roots movement becomes main political opposition" in *The Christian Science Monitor*, 18 February 1997, 8; and James Petras, "Latin America: The Resurgence of the Left" in *New Left Review*, no. 223 (May/June 1997).

8. Clipping together the variety of ways in which the pain of indigence works and its effect on the whole society, Paul James observes:

Sixty percent of the people now live below a harsh poverty line, but without the old means of agricultural subsistence. Brazil's tourist mecca of Rio has been through a stage of poverty cleansing — including the murder and cleansing out of its street children—but more than a million people cling to its outskirts, living in shanty towns with nowhere else to go.

Paul James, "Postdependency? The Third World in an Era of Globalism and Late-Capitalism" in *Alternatives* 22, no. 2 (April 1997): 222.

9. Three decades ago, in the early 1960s, the top 10 percent of wage-earners had 39.6 percent of the total income, while the bottom 10 percent received around 1.9 percent. By the beginning of the 1990s, the numbers were 48.7 ver-

sus 0.8 percent, respectively. Ronald M. Schneider, *Brazil: Culture and Politics in a New Industrial Powerhouse* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1996), 172. A small but telling item is this: the nearly 900,000 Brazilian tourists who visited the United States in 1996 spent more per capita than tourists from any other country. On the issue of inequality in the region in the era of globalization, see Douglas A. Chalmers et al., eds., *The New Politics of Inequality in Latin America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Henry Veltmeyer et al., *New Liberalism and Class Conflict in Latin America: A Comparative Perspective on the Political Economy of Adjustment* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).

10. Katia M. de Queiros Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil: 1550 – 1888* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, c1986). Full-blooded indigenous peoples have long been reduced to a very small count — at the moment perhaps less than one percent of the total population. Moreover, their numbers are still declining as pressures from the outside world continue. A recent episode that captures this cruel fate in a personal way is reported by Schemo. In April 1997, an Indian leader, Galdino Jesus dos Santos, of the Pataxó community in southern Bahia, travelled to the nation's capital, Brasília, to join the country's largest demonstration ever in support of indigenous peoples' rights. While resting at a bus stop, three young (aged 18–20), "well-educated" Whites doused him with gasoline and ignited his clothes on fire; he later died of third-degree burns. Defense lawyers argued that it was a case of careless playfulness! The judge released them with a mild reprimand. Diane Jean Schemo, "Brazil Furor over Ruling in the Death of an Indian" in *New York Times*, 14 August 1997, A5. Also see George Psacharopolus and Harry Pafrinos, eds., *Indigenous People and Poverty in Latin America* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1994).

11. The intellectual guru of this paradigm is Gilberto Freyre. His significant works include *The Masters and Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization* (New York: Knopf, 1946) and *Brazil: An Interpretation* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1945).

12. Earlier and outstanding works include Florestan Fernandes, *The Negro in Brazilian Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969); Anani Dzidzienny, *The Positions of Blacks in Brazilian Society* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1971); and Thomas Skidmore, *Black into White* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974). Skidmore's powerful work underscores a most diabolical element — the socially created urge to "whiten" everyone by erasing blackness through sexual acts. For examples of more recent writings, see Pierre-Michele Fontaine, ed., *Race, Class and Power in Brazil* (Los Angeles: UCLA Center for Afro-American Studies, 1985); Robert Levine, "Turning On the Lights: Brazilian Slavery Reconsidered One Hundred Years after Abolition" in *Latin American Research* 24, no. 2 (1989); Michael George Hanchard, *Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil, 1945–1988* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Abdias do Nascimento and Elisa Lorkin Nascimento, *Africans in Brazil: A Pan-African Perspective* (Trenton, N.J.: African World Press, Inc., 1992); and France Winddance Twine, *Racism in a Racial Democracy: The Maintenance of White Supremacy in Brazil* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

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13. "White supremacist oppression," writes Abdias do Nascimento, the elder statesman of Afro-Brazilian struggles, "in South and Central America is reflected in the general habit of referring to the area as 'Latin' America, in a show of insensibility or ignorance of the great majority of the region's people, who are not Latin at all, but African and/or Native American. The phrase expresses the European ruling classes' imposition of their cultural and ethnic identity on the region's very definition." Do Nascimento, *Africans in Brazil*, 87.
14. Roger Cohen, "Brazil Pays to Shield Currency, and the Poor See the True Cost" in *New York Times*, 5 February 1998, A1 and A10.