Interlocução

Not all of History is recorded in the books supplied to school children: pale History books and the neglected U.S./Brazilian dialogue over the New World African diaspora, 1914-1966*

John D. French

Writing at a moment of titanic struggles, Dr. Martin Luther King opened his famous 1963 book, Why We Can’t Wait by criticizing the "pale history books" available to the Black children of Harlem, New York, and Birmingham, Alabama. Published one year before the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, King decried the censored histories of Afro-North Americans and suggested that this cultivated ignorance affected U.S. Black youth and the prospects for deepening democracy in the nation. (1) Elsewhere in the African New World Diaspora in 1963, people of African descent in Brazil wished success to the anti-segregation struggles being waged in the United States by those linked to them by color. Yet both they and their white Brazilian neighbors also suffered from an equally "pale" education that reduced the role and the contribution of African-descended peoples to a minor shadow in Brazilian history.

Focusing on "missing pages" in the Brazilian/U.S. relationship, this chapter begins with a discussion of the concept of the New World African diaspora as a tool for understanding the historical inclusion and exclusion of African-descended peoples in the hemisphere. In particular, it examines three little known episodes of U.S./Brazilian dialogue that touch on the historical specificities of slavery, racism,

* This chapter was written for the conference "Resistance and Inclusion: Encounter on the Memory and History of Afro-Brazilians and Afro-North Americans," which was held November 25-26, 2002 in Rio de Janeiro with co-sponsorship by the Pontificia Universidade Católica of Rio de Janeiro and Consultative General of the USA. My personal thanks to Dr. Anthony Fugere, Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Consulate General in Rio; Pamela Howard-Rexquind, Director of the Rio office of the Library of Congress in Brazil; and Senior Cultural Affairs Specialist Victor Tamm. Warmest appreciation is also due to Denise da Fonseca, and her PUC collaborators, for the energy and verve with which this stimulating conference was conducted. Helpful comments on this chapter were also received from David Sartorius, Alexandre Velasco, and the Duke and Carolina students who discussed it as part of my "Diasporic Dialogues" seminar and working group.
The Diaspora Approach to the Afro-American World Experience

Why adopt a diasporic approach to the Afro-American World Experience?

1. In both Brazil and the United States, the African-descended (2) people are an integral part of the North American and African-descended, people are a long and deep historical roots and trajectory that pre-date later waves of immigration. Moreover, the Afro-American World, people who, according to the settlement, development, these divisions and cultures are the two distinct yet interrelated societies that are connected through distinct but related patterns of collective identity and individual agency. These realities have been surveyed and debated for at least two centuries in terms of public policy, trade, emancipation, and abolition.

2. Whether a diasporic framework is judged compelling to its potential constituency or not, Palmer argued, it is best understood as a project not an empirical reality.
"...diaporia is not just an imagic and symbolic community, but acts as a social, cultural and political construct..." (4)

For most, being an expatriate or returning home, the process of return is often viewed as a political act. It is a way of inserting oneself into the political, social, and economic fabric of the home country. The diaporia discourse and practice are well known across space and time. Diaspora is also a concept that has been historically and politically constructed to reflect the experiences of African, Latin American, and Asian peoples. It is a way of understanding the processes of migration and the construction of identities in the context of globalization. Diaspora is not just a way of understanding the experiences of people who have migrated, but also a way of understanding the processes of globalization and the construction of identities in the context of globalization. Diaspora is a concept that has been historically and politically constructed to reflect the experiences of African, Latin American, and Asian peoples. It is a way of understanding the processes of migration and the construction of identities in the context of globalization. Diaspora is not just a way of understanding the experiences of people who have migrated, but also a way of understanding the processes of globalization and the construction of identities in the context of globalization.

"...a practical connection between the Black scholar and the Black student..." (5)

They must do so, without turning Black scholarship..." (5)

"...a kind of objectivity..." (5)

"...a good example..." (5)

"...to prepare Black students for direct participation in Black communities..." (5)
A white "ruling class" dialogue on their respective "Black problems" (1914)

Writing in the mass circulation magazine The Outlook, former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt begins an oral contrast between the two countries. He claims, "If we were to name the one point in which there is overwhelming difference between the two countries, although it is not the only one, I think it is in the attitude toward the American Negro, after the Indian-standing with the Negro in Brazil, that it is in the U.S. We are the only large state in the world that has a large Negro population, and their attitude toward them is one of the most backward."

This statement is followed by what appears to be a derogatory description of Brazil and its influence on America's "Negro problem." Roosevelt continues, "As a self-conscious Anglo-Saxon on the border of a nation that is rapidly becoming an Indian nation, I refer to Brazil as one particular example of the influence of the large Negro population on American social life."

Roosevelt goes on to describe Brazil as "a nation of poorly educated Negroes, and a country where the Negro is not the ruling class. But in Brazil, he says, the Negro is "the leading class," as he sees the country as being run by a "Negro aristocracy." Roosevelt attributes this to the fact that the Negro population is "the largest population of highly assimilated Black Americans." He concludes, "As a result, we have the Negro problem in Brazil, and it is one of the most important in American social life."
blood but only as long as it is "not" Black. Moreover, they insisted to Roosevelt that "the very large European immigration" to Brazil would eventually make the stigmatized "Negro blood a smaller element of the blood of the whole community." The proper future racial direction for the country is clear to both Roosevelt and his Brazilian class counterparts: "the Brazilian of the future will in blood be more European than in the past, and he will differ in culture [from Europe] only as the American of the North differs" from the European homeland.

Returning to his paternalistic defense of a subdued Brazilian upper class, the former president assures his U.S. readers that white supremacy is not threatened by this peculiar Brazilian approach to the "Negro problem".

"The great majority of the men and women of high social position in Rio," he insists, "are of unmixed white blood at the corresponding class in Paris or Madrid or Rome. The great majority of the political leaders are pure whites [as well], with an occasional dash of Indian blood."

Returning yet again to this evident source of anxiety, Roosevelt once again reiterates that

"...the great majority of men and women I met, the leaders in the world of political and industrial efforts and of scientific accomplishment, showed little, if any, more trace of Negro blood than would be shown by the like number of similar men in a European capital."

(suggesting perhaps that this might not be true in the United States where the upper classes are truly pure and white). On the other hand, Roosevelt does report that the bottom of the class hierarchy is as it should be: most "Negros, and most of the colored people - that is, the mulattoes and quadros - do not make their way up to the highest positions, and they are proportionately most plentiful in the lower ranks". He even pauses to observe, reflecting on his travels, that "in Bahia there is a very large Negro element" but that it is far less significant in Rio.

For Roosevelt, it is especially important to address the most fundamental of racist anxieties in his home society: racial miscegenation. Yet he does so from the point of view of a leader of a Northern Republican establishment that had defeated the Southern slaveholders during the U.S. civil war a half century earlier, only to have later acquiesced to the legal segregation decreed by their former enemies. Thus, he contrasts the "white men" who do the bulk of the work in Rio unfavorably with what he sees as a parasitic class of lower-class southern whites who "live on the labor of the Blacks."

Moreover, he notes favorably that Brazil's working class whites work "side by side in the same organization" with Blacks, "draw no line against the Negro, and in the lower ranks intermarriages are frequent, especially between the Negros and the most numerous of the immigrant races of Europe." His position on this issue is shaped by Roosevelt's role in the United States as a self-identified champion of Anglo-Saxon supremacy, which defined itself, in those years, through its hostility against the inferior "new immigrants" to the U.S. who came from Southern and Eastern Europe. Thus it is not entirely surprising that he is untroubled by evidence of racial miscegenation in Brazil involving Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese immigrants. Yet his discussion of the issue is curiously euphemistic because he refers solely to inter-racial marriage and not concubinage, simple sex, or rape, all of which were illegal under U.S. statutes (inter-racial marriage would only be legalized in 1967 by a Supreme Court decision). (14)

Ideas about appropriate class hierarchies also play a role in ordering Roosevelt's own notions of racial purity. He is reassured by the fact that

"...in the middle classes [in Brazil] these intermarriages are rare, and in the higher class almost unknown so far as concerns men and women in which the Black strain is at all evident."

Even while voicing anxiety for their racial soundness, Roosevelt reveals the fundamental fraudulence, in U.S. eyes, of the claims to whiteness made by the "Brazilian upper ranks" among whom, he says,
course, that even the existence of ten times as many "out-of-place" African-descended people would not alter the racial inequalities in a country where the majority of the population is of African descent. Yet it is also interesting to ponder the U.S. roots of Roosevelt's interest in the fact that

"...these [colored] men were accepted quite simply on their worth, and apparently nobody had any idea of discriminating against them in any official or business relations because of their color."

It is precisely on the question of upward mobility by visibly African-descended peoples that Teddy Roosevelt engaged in his greatest and most outrageous distortions. First, he completely misreads the social dynamic that explains the rise of this handful of exceptional people of color. Ignoring patron/client, he presents their advancement in terms of the U.S. myth of advance based solely on individual worth and merit (a falsification of the U.S. experience in factual terms but powerfully alive as a nationalistic mythology). "Any Negro or mulatto [in Brazil] who shows himself fit," he claims, "is without question given the place to which his abilities entitle him." If this claim were true, of course, the absence of more than a handful of Blacks at the top of Brazilian society would offer compelling proof of Black inferiority. However statistically insignificant, the differing treatment of successful Blacks between Brazil and the United States is well illustrated by the case of W.E.B. Du Bois, a mulatto intellectual who emerged as the most influential leader of Afro-North Americans in the first half of 20th century. When Du Bois received his doctorate in the late 19th century, he was unable to find a regular job in any U.S. university of substance and import despite the fact that he had received his degree from Harvard University, the institution at the very apex of power and cultural capital then and now. Massachusetts-born, he had to move to a segregated Black institution in Atlanta, Georgia in order to get a job in his professional field - a trajectory quite unlike that of the mulatto engineer André Rebouças of Brazil. For an exceptional individual of color like Du Bois, who had acquired all of white society's credentials, the path to advancement in the United States was barred solely because of his African descent. This personal
Euro-North Americans who admits that race mixture in Brazil has weakened the country’s population to a point that “I don’t see any white blood,” although this occurs mostly among the first generation of immigrants and the lower classes. Yet, the case of Dr. Boi, a very direct connection to the theme “pure” Brazilian is exposed.

Rosensteel’s short article about Brazil and the Nego, in his most recent book, is directly contradicts the U.S. 1990 census figures that count the general population in Brazil as 24.8% of Blacks by words (what I would call a hierarchically archaic “racist” integrationism). While he’s strictly within the “white is right” school, clearly we need to consider the physical and mental traits of the “Black race” which he judges defensible as the only way Brazil can overcome, in his words, the “race between skin color, physical traits and mental capacity” as a “Black” race, which the ruling class does not judge the U.S. policy of “keeping the Black as the last resort for the good of the economy.”

The problem is not just the racial categories themselves, but the ways in which they are used and understood. The term “Black” is often used to refer to a single racial category, but in practice it encompasses a wide range of experiences and identities. This can be seen in the case of the “Nego,” who are often considered to be a distinct race, even though they are not recognized as such by the Brazilian government. The “Nego” are a group of people who are descended from a mix of European, African, and indigenous peoples. They are often seen as the “Other” in Brazilian society, and are often subjected to discrimination and racism.

In conclusion, it is clear that the concept of race is a complex and multifaceted issue, and that it is important to consider the ways in which it is used and understood. It is also important to recognize the ways in which race is used to justify and maintain systems of power and inequality. This is particularly important in Brazil, where the concept of race is often used to justify and maintain systems of power and inequality.
The persistence of Brazilian upper class racism at the height of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement Perambulo’s Calo Lino Cavalcanti

Teddy Roosevelt’s 1914 article documented the racist attitudes among the powerful with great accuracy. Such deeply rooted attitudes did not disappear from Brazilian society over the following half century, even as Brazil descended into a new and more changeable era. This was a period when the dominant class remained unchallenged by social movements outside its control, and a prominent number of prominent figures continued to promote their interests as if they were the only ones the nation could exist without. The early struggles for democracy and popular rights were overshadowed by the powerful sugar planters, and the elections of a new president were marred by violence and corruption. The dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas, which lasted from 1930 to 1945, did little to change this situation. Vargas was a strong man who used his power to silence opposition and maintain control. He was also a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

After Roosevelt’s death, Perambulo was still an influential force in Brazilian politics. He used his position to promote his own interests and those of his supporters. The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was not afraid to use violence and intimidation to get what he wanted, and his men were often involved in acts of murder and mayhem.

Perambulo’s rise to power was helped along by the economic growth that occurred during the first half of the 20th century. The country was developing rapidly, and there was a growing demand for sugar and other commodities. This created a boom in the sugar industry, and Perambulo was able to capitalize on it. He used his wealth and power to become a major force in Brazilian politics, and he was not afraid to use his influence to get what he wanted.

Perambulo’s influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a member of the Brazilian Senate and a member of the cabinets of several presidents. He was also a close associate of several important political figures, including Getúlio Vargas, the dictator who ruled Brazil from 1930 to 1945.

Despite his influence and power, Perambulo was not above using violence and intimidation to get what he wanted. He was not afraid to use his wealth and power to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

This situation remained largely unchanged until the end of the 20th century, when Brazil began to experience a period of rapid economic growth and political change. The country began to move away from its traditional economic model, which was based on the production of sugar and other commodities. This led to a period of rapid growth and development, which brought with it a new set of challenges and opportunities.

These challenges and opportunities were not without their costs, however. The rapid growth and development that occurred during this time also brought with it a new set of social problems, including poverty, inequality, and crime. These problems were often exacerbated by the government’s policies, which were often designed to benefit only a small number of wealthy people.

Despite these challenges, Brazil has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.

The Perambulo empire was vast, and its influence extended far beyond the borders of Brazil. He was a skilled politician who knew how to manipulate the masses and keep them happy with promises of progress and prosperity.

The country has made significant progress in recent years. The country has made major strides in reducing poverty, inequality, and crime, and it is now considered one of the most dynamic and promising economies in the world. The country is also making progress in addressing the social problems that have plagued it for so long.
...why a nation with so high an educational standard can...
still in some ways, understood that most humiliating stigma, i.e., racial caste. In other words, the country's freedoms and rights, by and ev...
racial subordination and oppression. For African-descended Brazilians, the enormous power and influence wielded by the United States further magnified the salience and import that a victory by Afro-North Americans would have for their own futures.

That this interpretation is by no means far-fetched is suggested by Bond's report on the 1964 city council ceremony which was attended by "the largest number of negroes yet seen at such a gathering". He observed that the Brazilians in attendance take “...great pride in the extent of racial integration in Brazil, and... had apparently adopted Martin Luther King as their own; they considered the award of the Nobel Peace Prize as an honor to Brazil as well as to the United States... The excitement aroused locally by the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to a noted American negro was quite impressive”,

he concluded. Looked at in a diasporic perspective, however, it is even more revealing that the presence of African-descended Brazilians at the special session influenced the content of the speeches vis-a-vis Brazil. Consul General Bond was well aware that Brazilians often claimed their country to be without a racial problem, so he noted with interest that “...many speakers, with a surprising amount of self-criticism and considerable truthfulness, emphasized that discrimination did exist within Brazil, despite the fact that Brazilian law, like that of the United States, guaranteed civil rights.”

Noting the abundant and "extravagant" praise for King, he claimed that the orators “...dwelt at length on the common dedication of Brazil and the United States to the ideals of democracy and Christianity exemplified by Martin Luther King.”

Muffled white voices from above: Adhemar de Barros and Martin Luther King Junior

The excitement in São Paulo over King's Nobel Peace Prize was followed up, within the week, by an official invitation to Martin Luther King from the Governor of the State. As reported by U.S. Public Affairs Officer Alfred V. Boerner, the official invitation was issued on 29 October 1964 by Adhemar de Barros, the state Governor who had been heavily involved with the conspiracies leading up to the military coup of March 31st 1964. His three-paragraph invitation spoke of how Brazilians had been stirred by the campaign to award him the Nobel Peace Prize:

“Long before the Royal Swedish Academy had chosen your name for the honorable award, the opinion of all the world had already selected you. There are some courses of action so just and legitimate,” it went on, “that they render any defense or support unnecessary. The truth defies arguments, since the truth, according to an old philosophical concept, is what it is. No more, no less”. Seemingly unaware of any underlying irony, it declared that “...the truth is that cry that cannot be suppressed, the right that cannot be oppressed, the sovereignty that cannot be tyrannized. You are ‘beloved and admired’ as a champion of peace by São Paulo’s fifteen million people”, it insisted. (29)

The governor's invitation said not a word about King's "Blackness" or his being a "Negro". Indeed, the document went beyond mere color blindness to suggest blindness itself: it contained no a single reference, direct or indirect, to the cause of civil rights for which King was struggling in the United States! Unlike his Brazilian counterparts at the City Council meeting five days earlier, many of them African-descended, Adhemar said not a word about racial discrimination even in the United States (and obviously not a word about Brazil). (30) Adhemar’s speech writers had decided, instead, to treat a Black champion of racial equality and human dignity as a man without a race or color; instead, King
Yet, Adenauer's speech was not widely noticed at the time. He was at the end of his political career, and his message was not picked up by the media or the public. The one-page, nine-line report covered the event in the United States, but it was not widely shared or discussed. The report also noted that while the speech was well received by the German delegation, the reaction from the American public was lukewarm. The report also highlighted the importance of the speech as a response to the Cold War, and how it helped to reinforce the friendship between Germany and the United States.

The challenge for forging a diaspora approach to the Black experience in the New World is not an easy one. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the African diaspora in the Americas represented a complex mix of cultural, social, and political influences. The challenges and opportunities faced by African-descended peoples in the Americas were shaped by a variety of factors, including the history of slavery, colonialism, and racism, and the ongoing struggle for freedom and equality.

The report also discussed the role of diaspora organizations and networks in the Americas, as well as the importance of education and cultural exchange in fostering understanding and unity among African-descended peoples. It noted that the diaspora approach must be rooted in a recognition of the unique experiences and contributions of African-descended peoples, and that it must be guided by a commitment to social justice and equality.

The report concluded by emphasizing the importance of continued dialogue and collaboration among African-descended peoples, and highlighted the potential for the diaspora approach to be a powerful force for positive change in the Americas.
we would like to call it), [that] properly situates Africa and her diaspora actively within the complex of New World history". (33)

African civilization and Blackness bear upon each other,

"...notes the University of Brasilia anthropologist Rita Segato, and the place of Africa and the place of race in New World nations are mutually suffused in a complex articulation [that] is extremely difficult to disentangle... [but that] varies according to national framework." (34)

Discussing the African New World Diaspora in 1998, Brazilian sociologist Denise Ferreira da Silva argued that

"...our shared Blackness has been traversed by the particular effects of specific nation[al], gender, and class conditions. Slavery and colonialism composed the historical ground (...) [but] in each case, it is constructed (...) according to historical and social conditions of a given multiracial social space." (35)

Her conclusion is echoed by Caribbeanist historian Thomas Holt who suggests that

"...it is the differences among the experiences of differently situated Black peoples that is important as well as, or perhaps, even more than, the unities or commonalities." (36)

The potential for mutual dialog can also be seen in a 1998 book co-edited by U.S. and Cuban scholars entitled Between Race and Empire: African-Americans and Cubans before the Cuban Revolution, which strives to circumvent unilateral impositions and nationalist posturing in its frank recognition of difference as well as similarity among the African-descended peoples of the New World. (37)

This exciting intellectual trend of the early 21st century represents, I believe, a salutary return to the politics that characterized the pioneering students of the African diaspora in the New World in the mid-twentieth century. It was an eminently international program of research and analysis that brought foreign scholars to Reade - such as Donald Pearson, Franklin Frazier, Lorenzo

Turner, Ruth Landes, Melville Herskovits, Roger Bastide - and that inspired a Brazilian scholarship that should not be conflated with the paternalistic posturing of Gilberto Freyre (Artur Ramos but especially, the work of Edison Carneiro). Yet these academic trends of the 1930s and 1940s were also linked to an emerging transnational political consciousness that drew inspiration from and informed the epic struggles of Black people and their allies against racism, colonialism, and fascism. When interviewed by the Jamaican Daily Gleaner in 1935, the Afro-North American singer Paul Robeson was emphatic in his emphasis on the diasporic dimension of the Black experience:

"We must remember that outside America [the U.S.] there are three other centers of Black population: the Caribbean Islands (Jamaica, Haiti, etc.), Brazil, with the whole of South America, and Africa. In these various regions Blacks speak different languages but in spite of that Afro-North Americans feel instinctively in sympathy with their own blood, the Black men of the whole world." (38)

The anti-imperialist dimension of this emerging international Black struggle was directly linked to a new valorization of both northward and Africa. For activists like Paul Robeson, the transnational commonalities between the historical trajectories of African-descended peoples were seen with striking clarity. As Paul Robeson wrote in 1949,

"Afro-North-Americans are the direct descendants of various African tribes which - from the beginning of the seventeenth century - [Portuguese], English, Dutch, Spanish, and French merchant-plunderers began transporting en masse for sale to America. To the native land and national culture, thrust into the most difficult conditions of slave existence amidst an alien and hostile population, the Africans had to adapt themselves to an alien life, language, culture, and religion (...) [while] subjected to the most brutal treatment in their backbreaking labor for their masters. And yet this enslaved people, oppressed by the double yoke of cruel exploitation and racial discrimination"
was not only a victim, he insisted, but the creator of a "...heterodox inspired, life-affirming" culture that "reflected a spiritual force, a people's faith in itself and a faith in its future." Black cultural expression and creativity were seen as an integral part of African and African-American history and identity. The struggle did not end with the end of slavery; it continued in the cultural expressions of the contemporary world, manifesting itself in the arts, music, literature, and more. It was a struggle for freedom and liberation, a testament to the resilience and strength of the African-American people.

The struggle continues, as evidenced by the ongoing fight for social justice and equality in the face of systemic racism and oppression. The history of the African-American struggle is a story of resilience, resistance, and redemption, a testament to the indomitable spirit of a people who have endured and overcome great adversity.
but also simultaneously nurtured and creative. Thus, as air absorbs a vacuum, diaspora seems to absorb status or fixity. Conceptually or methodologically, fixities will never capture its deeper meanings and significance (Thomas C. Holt, "Slavery and Freedom in the Atlantic World: Reflections on the Diasporic Framework."). In Crossing Boundaries: Comparative History of Black History in Diaspora, edited by Darlene Clark Hine and Jacqueline McLeod [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999], 37.

6. In the late 19th and early 20th century, the story of African descended peoples emerged as a weapon in the fight against legal segregation and Anglo-Saxon expansionism. Anchored among Afro-North Americans, this initiative commanded not only the African descended intellectual but a number of countries including the African diaspora. For the wider African diaspora, "the history of how Africa became African and yet remained Africa is the challenge for the next generation of scholars," Earl Lewis suggested in 1999. "It will require that we combine even more sophisticated conceptions of identity formation with even more imaginative historical questions and methods, that we recognize the permeability of boundaries and the multipolar nature of human as well as political actors." ("To Turn, or to Pivot: Writing African Americans into a History of Overlapping Diasporas," in Crossing Boundaries, 22.1.) For Schomburg's views on the importance of black history, see "The Negro Digs Up His Past [in African and the African Issue on Survey Graphics, no. March 1923] (the text is available from http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/harlem/contents.html). For a fascinating treatment of Schomburg, see Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, The Migrations of Arturo Schomburg, Schomberg, and Puerto Rico, in New York 1891-1938," Journal of African Ethnic History, 21, no. 1 (2001). Similar vindications of efforts were also being undertaken at this time by the African-descended Haitian intellectual Mouné Raisé in his essay "On the condition of the negro population as factor de civilización brasileira," available in English translation as The African Contribution to Brazilian Civilization [Tempe, Arizona: Center for Latin American Studies, Arizona State University, 1978].


8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 2.


12. This point about the wider implications of my argument is derived from penetrating comments offered on an early draft by the Cubanist historian David Santoro.

13. Theodore Roosevelt, "Brazil and the Negro." Outlook, February 21, 1914, 409-11; reproduced in John D. French, Sharing the Riches of Afro-Brazilian History: Undergraduate and Graduate Teaching Syllabi and Handouts [Durham: The African and American-American Studies Program of Duke University and the Consortium in Latin American Studies Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University, 2002], 156-160. (see http://www.duke.edu/web/lib/papers.html to order copies). This publication also includes an up-to-date introduction to the most recent English-language bibliography on Afro-Brazilian issues as well as pedagogical material that systematically explores the Brazil/U.S. comparison.


15. The questionably "white" nature of Brazilian upper class, when judged from a European or U.S. perspective, had left its members aware that genealogical obsessions could threaten their claims to racial purity. Long before President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's deconsecrating remark that all Brazilians "have a foot in the kitchen", the point had been well illustrated in a joke told about President Getulio Vargas. Eager to curry favor, the Papal Nuncio informed Vargas that extensive research had proved that the Vargas family was descended from a Spanish noble family. "Nesta matéria de genealogia," Vargas responded, "eu melhor não souprender mais porque, a vez, pode-se ter a surpresa de acabar no mato ou na cozinha, entre perros ou índios" [José Queiroz Júnior, 222 Anotações de Getúlio Vargas. Anotador Popular, Inverente e Filosófico. 2nd ed. [Rio de Janeiro: Companhia Brasileira de Artes Gráficas, 1955], 94].


19. Interview with Caio Lima Cavalcanti [one of the leaders of the 1930 Revolution in Pernambuco], 14 June 1966 in Rio de Janeiro by Robert J. Alexander (Robert Alexander Archive, Rutgers University, New Brunswick). The Brazilian portion of the Alexander interview collection consists of almost 1400 interviews from throughout the country over fifty years (15 reel microfilm editions of Alexander's complete interviews is now available from IDC Publishers in the Netherlands; web address: http://www.idc.nl).