

Black Identity Formation as Racial Politics
in São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil

Ariel Sloan
Fall 2007

Maurício Paixão
Coordenaco Geral do Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão

School for International Training- CSA Brazil- Northeast

Table of Contents

Abstract	1
Introduction	4
Literature Review	6
Methodology	13
Data Analysis/ Discussion	22
Conclusion	42
Bibliography	43
Appendix	45

Abstract

What is Black identity in São Luis, Maranhão and how does the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão use Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá to construct black identity with Afro- descendants in São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil? Through active participation in Bloco Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá rehearsals and performances, interviews with Bloco Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá leaders and participants, and interviews with CCN leadership, the process of black identity formation encouraged by CCN through its two cultural projects emerged as a definite progression. This progression includes the preservation and valorization of Afro-Brazilian culture, developing self-esteem about Afro- descendant, constructing a black identity with Afro-descendants and finally engaging Afro- descendants in racial politics. The Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão develops black identity through cultural activities such as music, dance and spirituality, and that this process of black identity formation through cultural activities constitutes racial politics in São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil. Further, Afro- descendants in São Luis, Maranhão more frequently participate in racial politics through black identity formation within cultural activities because few, if any, spaces for racial politics exist outside of the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão, and similar Black Movement NGO's. In São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil, black identity formation and racial politics occur in the realm of Afro-Brazilian culture (i.e. music, dance, religion) and outside the realm of formal channels of representative democracy.

What is black identity in São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil and how does the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão construct black identity with Afro- descendants in São Luis, Maranhão? More specifically, how does the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão utilize the projects Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá to construct black identity with Afro- descendants in São Luis, Maranhão? It is by belief that the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão develops black identity within Afro-Brazilian cultural activities such as music, dance and spirituality, and this process of black identity formation through Afro-Brazilian cultural activities amounts to racial politics in São Luis, Maranhão. Further, Afro- descendants in São Luis, Maranhão more frequently participate in racial politics within black identity formation through Afro-Brazilian cultural activities rather than formal channels of representative democracy. The process of black identity formation present in São Luis, Maranhão suggests important consequences for the Black Movement in Brazil and significant opportunities for collaborative work between Afro-Brazilians and other communities within the African Diaspora.

As a scholar of African American Studies studying in the United States, I am not readily exposed to the history, culture, and social thought of Brazilians developed in Portuguese. North American researchers informed my past understanding of black identity in Brazil. Through my choice of this research topic, I intended to end my ignorance of black identity in Brazil and become informed through direct contact with Afro-descendants in São Luis, Maranhão. I was anxious to learn through a new methodology, a methodology that does not include a classroom or library. I desired to compare my interpretation of black identity in the United States to an interpretation of black identity in Brazil. The similar histories of the United States and Brazil present interesting comparison within the Africa Diaspora. My African heritage and position in

the black community are defining characteristics of my identity and experience in the United States. I was curious as to why black identity is less pronounced in Brazil. In seeking out those Afro-descendants who participate in the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão projects Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá, I constructed an understanding of how the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão connects Afro-Brazilian cultural activities such as music, dance and spirituality to the process of black identity formation.

The process of black identity formation promoted by the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão through the Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá and various other projects is a part of the larger struggle for social justice in Brazil. The realization of social justice requires an active effort on the part of individuals working as a collective body to deconstruct existing structures of oppression. The Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão, as an organization within the larger Black Movement in Brazil, is a collective body of individuals working towards the realization of social justice. It is my belief that the process of black identity formation promoted by the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão amounts to racial politics in São Luis, Maranhão. By developing black identity with Afro-descendants in São Luis, Maranhão, the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão also promotes the formation of a popular black identity in Brazil. The next steps towards a mass anti-racist social movement and the realization of social justice include fostering dialogue, increasing public consciousness and developing politics of inclusion. Through the process of black identity formation, the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão promotes all of these steps towards the realization of social justice. Further, its collaboration with other organizations within the Black Movement in Brazil suggests additional opportunities for joint efforts towards deconstructing oppressive systems in Brazil and abroad.

Literature Review

Brazil's international reputation as a racial paradise stems, in part, from Brazil's celebration of its African heritage. For example, Samba, Capoeira, and Candomblé are representations of Afro-Brazilian culture and national symbols of Brazil. These and other patterns of African influence in Brazilian society lend themselves to two interpretations of Brazil's racial ideology. In the 1930's, Gilberto Freyre transformed the concept of miscegenation into a positive identifying characteristic of Brazil. Freyre argued that a harmonious mixture of European, African and Indigenous peoples and culture in Brazil impeded the racism that affected other large multiracial nations. Writing less than a quarter of a century later, Florestan Fernandes contradicted the ideology of racial democracy, calling it a myth, and argued that racism was widespread in Brazil. Fernandes' conclusions continue to influence current investigations of race in Brazil including the work of Edward E. Telles and Michael George Hanchard.

In this review of past and contemporary perceptions of Brazil's racial ideology, I will explore the contradictions between Freyre's racial democracy ideology and Fernandes inspired investigations of race in Brazil. Further, I will highlight the relationship between Brazilian racial ideology and the successes (or failures) of the Black Movement in Brazil. Through close readings of empirical and ethnographic data drawn from Telles' *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil* and Hanchard's *Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil, 1945- 1988*, I will suggest that the complexities surrounding Brazil's racial ideology inhibit the formation of a popular black identity and the mass mobilization of Afro- descendents in Brazil. And the absence of a popular black identity and a mass mobilization of Afro- descendents in Brazil promote a pattern of racial identity

formation and racial politics that is unique to Brazil. In Brazil, racial identity formation and racial politics occur in the realm of Afro-Brazilian culture (i.e. music, dance, religion) and outside the realm of formal channels of representative democracy.

The trajectory of perceptions of Brazil's racial ideology includes three distinct periods. The ideology of a racial democracy best typifies the first period in which a majority of Brazilians believed that the fluidity between different races prevented racial discrimination. Following the debunking of racial democracy by Fernandes, racial discrimination was perceived as widespread, but transitory. And finally, contemporary writers now recognize racial discrimination as a structural and persistent phenomenon.¹

Prior to this trajectory of perceptions of Brazil's racial ideology, Brazilians, more specifically white elites in Brazil, experienced a period of anxiety about the racial composition of Brazil. Following the abolition of slavery in the Western Hemisphere, the science of eugenics grew in popularity worldwide. Eugenics perpetuated the racist ideologies of systems of slavery with a bogus scientific hierarchy of races. Brazil contained a diverse population of Europeans, Indigenous peoples and Africans, including the largest population of Afro-descendants outside the continent of Africa. The overwhelming popularity of eugenics condoned this racial mixture. Therefore during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Brazilian white elites exhausted several methods of transforming Brazil's racial composition consisting of the exclusion of Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants from Brazilian society, and the encouragement European immigration.²

¹ Edward E. Telles, [Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil](#). (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), Chapter 1 Introduction.

²Edward E. Telles, [Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil](#). (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), Chapter 2 From White Supremacy to Racial Democracy.

In *Casa Grande e Senzala*, Gilberto Freyre fully developed and expressed the ideology of racial democracy. This ideology pacified the prior unequivocal racism of Brazil. In the context of Freyre's work, "democracy" means brotherhood or fluidity among social groups, not a structural institution.³ His research focused on social relations such as intermarriage and residential life. Freyre interpreted the high rate of intermarriage and low residential segregation as evidence of mild levels of racial discrimination in Brazil. Freyre explained the racial inequalities present in Brazil as residual consequences of slavery or manifestations of traditional cultural values. Although Freyre interpreted Brazil's racial inequality as mild, he acknowledged that racial differences were conditioned by class. For Freyre, being Brazilian implied a multi-racial identity; therefore he predicted that racial inequality would disappear.⁴

The ideology of racial democracy received considerable state support from the Brazilian government, and Brazilians embraced the international reputation of Brazil as a racial paradise. In response to this reputation, UNESCO commissioned Florestan Fernandes of the University of São Paulo as the primary researcher in a series of studies about Brazilian race relations. Writing less than a quarter of century later than Freyre, Fernandes directly contradicted Freyre's conclusions, calling racial democracy a myth. His research focused on disparities in income and education, rather than social relations surrounding marriage and residential life. Fernandes largely ignored intermarriage as an indicator of race relations and denounced it as an attempt to whiten the Brazilian population. Fernandes identified widespread discrimination. And he explained these racial inequalities as social and psychological consequences of slavery. Although Fernandes debunked the ideology of racial democracy, he believed that racism was incompatible

³ Edward E. Telles, *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), Chapter 2 From White Supremacy to Racial Democracy.

⁴ Edward E. Telles, *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), Chapter Chapter 1 Introduction.

with industrialization. Fernandes predicted that racial inequality would disappear with capitalist's development.⁵

The work of Edward E. Telles and Michael George Hanchard represents the current generation of Brazilian race ideologists. These contemporary researchers support Fernandes' assertion that racial democracy is a myth in Brazil, but argue that racial discrimination is a persistent phenomenon with origins in structural institutions. Further, these writers identify the lasting consequences of the ideology of racial democracy for the Black Movement in Brazil and its ability to combat structural racism. The Black Movement in Brazil has been unable to form a popular black identity or sustain a mass mobilization of Afro-descendants in Brazil. The absence of a popular black identity and a mass mobilization of Afro- descendants in Brazil promote a pattern of racial identity formation and racial politics that is unique to Brazil. In Brazil, racial identity formation and racial politics in Brazil occur in the realm of Afro-Brazilian culture (i.e. music, dance, religion) and outside the realm of formal channels of representative democracy.

In *Race in another America: the Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*, Telles argues that the Neo-Liberal economic model created massive economic growth in Brazil with little effect on the racial inequalities. As indicated by the 1999 UN Index of Human Development, a measure of development using life expectancy, infant mortality, adult literacy and school enrollment, the white population of Brazil is 69th and the black population of Brazil is 108th in a list of 174 countries.⁶ Telles explains the abyss of 39 countries between the white and black population of Brazil as a result of hyper income inequality, a discriminatory glass ceiling and a racist culture. The almost entirely white middle and upper classes ignore the educational needs of the multi-

⁵ Edward E. Telles, *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), Ch 1 Introduction.

⁶ Edward E. Telles, *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), Ch 5 Racial Inequality and Development.

racial, disproportionately non-white lower class. Non-white individuals do not have access to upward economic or social mobility. Therefore income inequality persists. One-third of Brazil lives in poverty and one-half of those individuals are non-white. Further Brazilian white elites believe that a subordinate social position is the appropriate place for the black population.⁷

Telles analyzed empirical data in regards to social inequalities including income, poverty, education, occupation, and social relations including marriage and residential segregation. Telles identified structural and systematic racial inequalities in access to education which greatly affects occupation and income. But, he failed to find indications of social separation between whites and blacks. Rates of intermarriage are some of the highest in the world and residential segregation is low. For Telles, racial inequality and racial integration coexist in Brazil because miscegenation reproduces racial inequalities. Social inequalities and social relations are both a part of a system of racial domination. Miscegenation and the lack of segregation allow social inequalities to persevere without state intervention by the Brazilian government. Further, Brazilian society uses miscegenation to resist the demands of the Black Movement.⁸

This failure of Fernandes' prediction led to the development of the Black Movement in Brazil in the second half of the twentieth century. In the 1970's the Black Movement in Brazil organized its grassroots efforts into NGO's. An example of this development, important to the current investigation of black identity in São Luis, Maranhão, was the establishment of Bloco Ilê Aiyê, an exclusively black Carnival school, in 1974 by blacks in Salvador, Bahia. Bloco Ilê Aiyê was in response to the exclusion of blacks in previous Carnivals. Bloco Ilê Aiyê's actions in favor of negritude indicate the linkage between Afro-Brazilian cultural activities and racial

⁷ Edward E. Telles, *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), Ch 9 Rethinking Brazilian Race Relations.

⁸ Edward E. Telles, *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), Ch 9 Rethinking Brazilian Race Relations.

politics.⁹ Further, the Black Movement in Brazil openly denounced the ideology of “racial democracy” and began building the political consciousness of Afro- descendents through racial identity formation.

The Black Movement in Brazil has successfully provoked the Brazilian government to acknowledge racism and engaged the Brazilian government in a discussion of public policies to redress racism, and secured policies such as Affirmative Action. Despite its success, the Black Movement in Brazil has failed to construct a popular black identity or sustain a mass mobilization to confront racism. Black Movement leaders connect the inability to sustain a mass mobilization with the inability to form a popular black identity. Further, the Black Movement in Brazil has only limited incorporation into formal channels of representative government.

In *Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, Brazil 1945- 1988*, Hanchard specifically analyzes the successes and failures of the Black Movement in Brazil. His central research question is “Why has there been no sustained Afro-Brazilian movement in Brazil comparable to the civil rights movement in the United States or nationalist insurgencies in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of the New World during the post- World War period?¹⁰” Hanchard argues that the ideology of “racial democracy” neutralizes the process of racial identity formation among nonwhites and impedes the mobilization of Afro-descendants. Further, a collective racial identity is an improbable point of mass mobilization for Afro- descendents in Brazil because Afro-descendants do not readily recognize patterns of racial

⁹Edward E. Telles, *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), Ch 3 From Racial Democracy to Affirmative Action.

¹⁰Michael George Hanchard, *Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1945- 1988*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 5.

discrimination. This sustained de-mobilization of Afro-descendants in Brazil is a product of Brazil's most prevalent racial ideology, racial democracy.¹¹

Hanchard outlines a specific criterion for interpreting the racial identities of Afro-descendants outside and within the Black Movement in Brazil. Afro-descendants outside the Black Movement potentially demonstrate one of two levels of black identity, faint resemblances or strong resemblances. Hanchard defines faint resemblances as “chance (visual memory) that prompts an instinctive notion of common origin or shared history of oppression,¹²” and strong resemblances are “strategic mobilization of feelings initially nurtured on the faint level... [that] overcomes particular differences within a social collectivity for concrete goals.¹³” Faint resemblances occur in response to explicit racial discrimination. Strong resemblances are the polarization of faint resemblances within the context of mass mobilization.

Afro-descendants within the Black Movement in Brazil demonstrate a strong resemblance that functions of two dimensions; local and global. The local dimension includes a home grown process of black identity formation specific to the Brazilian context. The process of black identity formation reflects a racial consciousness consisting of reactions to discriminatory practices and a consciousness of racism. The global dimension includes an awareness of black identities in other parts of the African Diaspora. This dimension forms through images of blackness from the United States and other countries with the African Diaspora that oppose the negative image of blackness in Brazil. Through these images Afro-descendants in Brazil recognize a common origin in Africa and a common oppressor. Hanchard argues that Afro-

¹¹ Michael George Hanchard, Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1945- 1988. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), Introduction.

¹² Michael George Hanchard, Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1945- 1988. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 80.

¹³ Michael George Hanchard, Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1945- 1988. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 82.

descendants within the Black Movement in Brazil participate in racial politics because they are able to relate personal experiences with racial discrimination and racism to a black identity.¹⁴

As demonstrated in this review of past and contemporary perceptions of Brazil's racial ideology, the complexities surrounding Brazil's racial ideology inhibit the formation of a popular black identity and the mass mobilization of Afro- descendants in Brazil. The current investigation of black identity formation through the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão projects Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá presumes that the absence of a popular black identity and a mass mobilization of Afro- descendants in Brazil promote a pattern of racial identity formation and racial politics that is unique to Brazil. It is by belief that the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão develops black identity through Afro-Brazilian cultural activities such as music, dance and spirituality, and this process of black identity formation through cultural activities amounts to racial politics in São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil. Further, Afro- descendants in São Luis, Maranhão more frequently participate in racial politics within black identity formation through Afro-Brazilian cultural activities rather than formal channels of representative democracy. In São Luis, Maranhão racial identity formation and racial politics occur in the realm of Afro-Brazilian culture (i.e. music, dance, religion) and outside the realm of formal channels of representative democracy.

Methodology

To investigate Black identity in São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil I observed and participated in the activities of the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão as the NGO prepared for and celebrated National Black Consciousness Day (November 20). In celebration of National Black Consciousness Day, the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão organized a week of events

¹⁴ Michael George Hanchard, Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1945- 1988. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), Chapter 5 Formation of Racial Consciousness.

(November 16-24, 2007). Because I was most interested in how Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão develops Black identity through Afro-Brazilian cultural activities such as music, dance and spirituality, I primarily observed and participated in the projects Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá. These two projects engage participants and members of the São Luis community in the cultural manifestations of black identity. Over a three- week period in São Luis, Maranhão and especially during the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão's Black Consciousness Week; I observed Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá rehearsals and performances. Additionally, I participated in the interactive portions of Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá performances.

Additionally, I interviewed two leaders of the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão, a current General Coordinator and a former president, one of the Coordinators of Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu, one of the Coordinators of Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá, and five participants of a Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá in order to gain their perspectives on Black identity and cultural manifestation of Black identity in São Luis, Maranhão. I define participants as those individuals whose role in Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá was confirmed by their attendance at Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá rehearsals and performances. I scheduled the interviews with the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão leaders, including the General Coordinator, former President and the Project Coordinator of Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá, therefore these interviews were more formal interviews with a tape recorder present. I utilized a tape recorder in these settings because I desired to have a clear understanding of how the leadership of the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão defines Black identity and construes the process of Black identity formation. Because the Project Coordinator of Bloco Afro Akomabu provided the homestay for my stay in São Luis, Maranhão, the interview with her occurred over a series of informal conversations within the

homestay. The interviews with Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá participants occurred within the context of preparation for and celebration of the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão's Black Consciousness Week. Consequently these interviews were less formal interviews without a tape recorder present.

It must also be noted that the projects Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá were not all exclusive of my experience at the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão. Additionally, I observed and participated in the activities of Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” and Projeto Quilombo e Resistência Negra (PQRN). Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” provides a space for adolescents and young adults in São Luis, Maranhão to resist urban violence (i.e. drugs and gangs) and engage in positive activities (i.e. drum- making and graffiti). Projeto Quilombo e Resistência Negra (PQRN) develops public policies and human rights with “quilombo” communities in the interior of Maranhão. I observed Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” and Projeto Quilombo e Resistência Negra (PQRN) workshops. Further I participated in a two group discussions with Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” participants. Each discussion consisted of a dialogue with twenty or more Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” participants. Although the objectives of these two projects do not directly relate to cultural manifestations of black identity, the influence of Afro- Brazilian culture is present in the activities of these two projects. My experiences with these two projects contributed to my understanding of black identity in São Luis, Maranhão.

National Black Consciousness Day

As previously stated, this investigation of black identity in São Luis, Maranhão transpired within the context of Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão's preparation for and celebration of National Black Consciousness Day (November 20). National Black Consciousness Day is a

symbol of the Black Movement in Brazil's efforts to construct a popular black identity with Afro-descendants and to create a mass anti-racist social movement. The date of National Black Consciousness Day originates with Zumbi, arguably the greatest symbol of African resistance to slavery. In 1597, former African slaves established Palmares, a "quilombo" community in the Serra da Barriga region of Alagoas. The Portuguese assassinated Zumbi, an important leader of this community, on November 20, 1695. And the Black Movement adopted the date of Zumbi's assassination in commemoration of "false" abolition during the 1980's. On November 20, 1995, the Black Movement in Brazil organized the March for Zumbi with 30,000 individuals in Brasilia. In that year the day officially became recognized by the Brazilian federal government as national holiday.¹⁵ In celebration of National Black Consciousness Day, the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão organized a week of events (November 16-24, 2007). During Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão's Black Consciousness Week, the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão engaged in defining and constructing black identity with Afro-descendants in São Luis, Maranhão.

São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil

Before engaging with question of black identity in São Luis, Maranhão it is important to first describe the city of São Luis, Maranhão. São Luis, Maranhão, at a latitude of 2° 34' South and a longitude of 44° 16' West, is located on São Luis island in the Baía de São Marcos, surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean which forms the estuary of the Pindaré, Mearim, and Itapecuru rivers. São Luis is the 16th largest city in Brazil with a metropolitan area of 1.2 million people.¹⁶

Due to a lack of international investment and tourism, São Luis is less commercially developed than Fortaleza, Recife, or Salvador. The more developed beaches, Praia do Calhau

¹⁵Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão, "XXV Semana da Consciencia Negra No Maranhao, Valeu Zumbi, 20 de Novembro- Dia Nacional da Consciencia Negra," (2007).

¹⁶"Maranhao," in *Brazil: A Let's Go Travel Guide* ed. Luis Rego (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 445.

and Praia do Olho d Agua, are bordered by simple bars and restaurants, not high-rise hotels. Although São Luis displays the largest collection of colonial architecture in South America, the historic center of São Luis, near the Baía de São Marcos, contains the greatest concentration of this colonial architecture. While riding through São Luis, I viewed numerous buildings, especially churches, in various states of deterioration or restoration. In contrast, I also noticed extensive housing development in the São Francisco sector of São Luis. São Francisco is a more modern sector of São Luis across the bay from the historic center. Numerous gated communities of townhomes or apartment complexes currently exist or are in the process of construction. The São Luis public transportation system is neither efficient nor effective. Personally owned cars line the streets of neighborhoods and fill the parking lots of apartment complexes. Further, rush hour traffic in São Luis is comparative to that of much larger metropolitan areas. Finally, the phenotype of the São Luis population reflects African and indigenous heritage, and miscegenation.¹⁷

The Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão

The Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão (CCN) at Rua dos Guaranis, s/n- Barés João Paulo, São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil CEP: 65040-630 is a Black Movement NGO. On September 19, 1979 a group of Afro-descendants in São Luis, Maranhão, including Dr. Luiz Alves Ferreira, established CCN to valorize the Afro-descendant population of Maranhão and fight racial discrimination and institutions of racism. The mission statement of CCN:

Conscientização política e cultural para resgatar a identidade e ética cultural e auto-estima do povo negro viabilizando ações que contribuam com a promoção de sua organização em busca de

¹⁷ See ISP Work Journal Observations “12 November, 2007, São Luis, Maranhão”

cidadania combatendo todas as formas de intolerância causadas pelo racismo e promovendo os direitos da população negra do Maranhão.¹⁸

CCN engages in political, social, cultural, religious, and educational activities. More specifically, CCN builds the political consciousness of Afro-descendants in Maranhão and works towards public policies and human rights that guarantee the quality of life for the Afro-descendant population of Maranhão.

CCN administers an elaborate network of projects related to its mission statement. All CCN projects are organized under three thematic areas; Afro-Brazilian Culture and Identity, Formation and Participation, and Public Policy and Human Rights. Afro-Brazilian Culture and Identity projects deal with cultural manifestations of black identity. These projects include Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu, Grupo de Dança Afro Abanja, Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês”, and Projeto Ato-Ire. Formation and Participation projects direct political activism. These projects include Projeto Consciência Negra em Ação and Projeto CCN nos Bairros. Public Policy and Human Rights projects aim to secure public policies and human rights for quilombos, or communities of Afro-descendants within interior of Maranhão. These projects include Projeto Quilombola Residência Negra, Projeto Vida de Negra, Projeto Saúde e Ambiente para População Negra, Consórcio Social da Juventude, and Tambores Quilombolas.¹⁹

The leadership of CCN consists of three General Coordinators, the Project Coordinators of each CCN project, and the numerous pedagogas. The current General Coordinators of CCN are Dr. Luiz Alves Ferreira, Raimundo Maurício Matos Paixão, and Ana Amélia Bandeira Barros. Their responsibilities include general administration of CCN and coordination between CCN projects. A commission of multiple Project Coordinators administers each of CCN's

¹⁸ Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão, Sistema de Gestão (São Luís, Maranhão, 2006).

¹⁹ Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão, Sistema de Gestão (São Luís, Maranhão, 2006).

projects. Their responsibilities include the organization, coordination and financial sustainability of their specific CCN project. The numerous pedagogas work under the Project Coordinators.²⁰

CCN is located in the low income to working class bairro of João Paulo. João Paulo is a favela in need of further urbanization, including better sanitation and higher quality homes. In contrast, CCN is a large modern complex with two structures painted white with blue trimming. The name of the NGO, Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão, is spray painted over the entrance.²¹ The first building houses the office of the secretary, a cantina, and restrooms. The second building houses a library, three classrooms, three offices, a woodshop, a t-shirt screen printing room, storage areas, and an auditorium. In between these two parallel buildings is an open space that serves as a sitting area for audience members of CCN Shows. Perpendicular to these two buildings is a platform stage with a modern sound system.

Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu. To investigate black identity in São Luis, Maranhão, I observed and participated in the activities of the CCN project Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu. Bloco Afro Akomabu is an “Afoxé,” or black Carnival group that reflects the influence of the African religious tradition of Candomblé. Mina Candomblé Terreiros (Jeje-nagô dialect) in São Luis greatly influence Bloco Afro Akomabu. CCN created Bloco Afro Akomabu on March 3, 1984 to combat racism by preserving and valorizing the culture of Afro- descendants in Maranhão. Bloco Afro Ilê Aiyê in Salvador, Bahia motivated the creation of Bloco Afro Akomabu. Bloco Afro Akomabu continues to look to Bloco Afro Ilê Aiyê for inspiration. CCN derived “akomabu” from the African language of Fon. “Akomabu” means “A cultura nao deve morrer” (Culture never dies).

²⁰ Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão, *Sistema de Gestão* (Sao Luis, Maranhão, 2006).

²¹ See ISP Work Journal Observations “12 November, 2007, 11:00 am- 11:30 am, CCN”

Bloco Afro Akomabu parades through the streets of São Luis with percussion instruments during Carnival (mid-February of each year). Between the months of November and February, Bloco Afro Akomabu conducts elaborate “rehearsals in the street” in preparation for Carnival. Additionally, Bloco Afro Akomabu includes the Banda Afro Akomabu. Bloco Afro Akomabu created the Banda Afro Akomabu in 2002. Banda Afro Akomabu is a smaller group within Bloco Afro Akomabu that performs at CCN’s weekly shows and local cultural events in São Luis throughout the year.

The central objective of Bloco Akomabu is to present cultural expressions of black identity and to valorize black culture. Bloco Afro Akomabu also facilitates a relationship between Bloco Afro Akomabu and the community of São Luis. Two Project Coordinators, Nonato Santos and Maria de Fatima Sousa, coordinate the 30 musicians, over two hundred young people, and thousands of attendants at rehearsals and Carnival presentations. Additionally, the Project coordinators prepare teaching materials about Afro-Brazilian culture; conduct workshops about African influenced music, dance and art at schools, universities, neighborhoods in São Luis, quilombo communities in the interior of Maranhão, and other organizations in the Northeast of Brazil; plan Banda Afro Akomabu performances at local cultural events, and secure financial support from Brazilian and global foundations, institutions, and individuals.

Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá. To investigate black identity in São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil I also observed and participated in the activities of the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão project Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá. Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá is an African dance group and the first African dance group in the state of Maranhão.²² CCN created Grupo de

²² See ISP Work Journal Interviews “24 November, 2007, 6 pm – 7 pm, CCN Secretary’s Office, Antonio Henrique Franca Costa”

Dança Afro Abanjá in 1985 to combat racism by preserving and valorizing black culture. Members of Bloco Afro Akomabu participated in their first dance workshop on April 16, 1985 workshop with Edson Katende, a Bahia- born militant of Centro de Estudos e Defesa do Negro do Para- CE- DENPA. And the first Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá performance was at the Umbanda Terreiro of Luz and Vida de Mariazinha in the bairro of Monte Castelo bairro. Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá received the blessings of the orixas, voduns, and saints on this occasion. These same orixas, voduns and saints continue to guide Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá.²³ CCN derived “abanjá” from the African language of Yourba. “Abanjá” means “Na luta agora ja” (Already still in the struggle).²⁴

Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá dances through the streets of São Luis as part of the Bloco Afro Akomabu processional during Carnival and the “rehearsals in the street.” Additionally, Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá performs in CCN Shows and at local cultural events throughout the year including artistic productions, festivals, and dance shows.²⁵ Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá has performed in Pernambuco, Belem-PA, Bahia, and Santa Catarina.²⁶ Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá conducts workshops, seminars and debates in additions to performances in relation to the larger mission of CCN.²⁷

The central objective of Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá is to redeem and preserve the culture of Afro- descendants in Maranhão, to contribute to the construction and fortification of self esteem among children, adolescents, and young people of Afro-descent, to increase the exercise

²³ Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhao “Abanja Abanja- Ano – No° 1- Publicacao do Grupo de Danca Afro Abanja do Centro de Cultra Negra do Maranhao,” (2005).

²⁴ Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhao, Sistema de Gestao (Sao Luis, Maranhao, 2006).

²⁵ Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhao, Sistema de Gestao (Sao Luis, Maranhao, 2006).

²⁶ See ISP Work Journal Interviews “24 November, 2007, 6 pm – 7 pm, Sao Luis- CCN Secretary’s Office, Antonio Henrique Franca Costa”

²⁷ Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhao, Sistema de Gestao (Sao Luis, Maranhao, 2006).

of citizenship and struggle for rights in the black population including children, teenagers and young people of Afro- descent in the communities adjacent to CCN.

Three Project Coordinators, Antonio Henrique França Costa, Gilmar Freitas Correia, and Joana Carla Algaves Araùjo, choreograph and plan all the Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá performances. In choreographing Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá performances they primarily use African rhythms like “Afoxe” “Macule” “Afro Primitivo,” but Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá also performs dances typical of the Afro-descendant population of Maranhão.

Dances typical of the Afro-descendant population of Maranhão include “Tambor de Crioula,” “Dança do Coco,” “Dança do Divino,” “Bumba-Meu-Boi,” “Tambor de Mina” and “Dança do Cacuria.” More specifically, “Bumba-Meu-Boi” is a celebration of the bull in rural areas of Maranhão. The celebration has a long history in connection with resistance in the black population of Maranhão. The first Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá performance of “Bumba-Meu-Boi” was in Belem, Para on July 1987 at VII Encontro de Negros do N/NE organized by CEDENPA and CCN. The conference focused on rescuing dance, theatre, music and other manifestations of Maranhense culture that are African in origin.²⁸ CCN celebrates “Bumba-Meu-Boi” on July 30 of each year in the João Paulo bairro of Sao Luis.²⁹

Data Analysis/ Discussion

What is black identity in São Luis, Maranhão and how does the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão use Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá to construct black identity with Afro-descendants in São Luis, Maranhão? Through active participation in Bloco Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá rehearsals and performances, interviews

²⁸ Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhao “Abanja Abanja- Ano – No°1- Publicacao do Grupo de Danca Afro Abanja do Centro de Cultra Negra do Maranhao,” (2005).

²⁹ Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhao “Abanja Abanja- Ano – No°1- Publicacao do Grupo de Danca Afro Abanja do Centro de Cultra Negra do Maranhao,” (2005).

with Bloco Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá leaders and participants, and interviews with CCN leadership, the process of black identity formation encouraged by CCN through its two cultural projects emerged as a definite progression. This progression includes the preservation and valorization of Afro-Brazilian culture, developing self-esteem about Afro-descendants, constructing a black identity with Afro-descendants and finally engaging Afro-descendants in racial politics. The Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão develops black identity through Afro-Brazilian cultural activities and this process of black amounts to racial politics in São Luis, Maranhão. Further, Afro- descendants in São Luis, Maranhão more frequently participate in identity formation and racial politics through cultural activities rather than formal channels of representative democracy. In São Luis, Maranhão, black identity formation and racial politics occur in the realm of Afro-Brazilian culture (i.e. music, dance, religion) and outside the realm of formal channels of representative democracy.

Preserve and Valorize Afro-Brazilian Culture

The explicit objective of Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá is to preserve and valorize Afro-Brazilian culture. Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá rescue Afro-Brazilian music, dance, and spirituality from the exploitive powers of the Brazilian elite class, a class that exploits Afro-Brazilian culture to perpetuate the myth of racial democracy in Brazil. In reclaiming Afro-Brazilian culture Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá encourage the Afro-descendant population of Maranhão to recognize and value its African heritage. Each song and dance type represents the effort undertaken by Afro-descendants in Brazil to preserve the history and culture of the displaced Africans who began arriving in Brazil over 400 years ago. Through the performance of African music and dance, Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança

Afro Abanjá communicate the values of struggle and resistance to the Afro-descendent population of Maranhão. Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá heartens the Afro-descendant population of Maranhão to think of themselves as resisters to racial oppression rather than victims of racial oppression.

During my visit to CCN, I observed Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá make possible the preservation and valorization of Afro-Brazilian culture. More specifically, I observed Bloco Afro Akomabu conduct elaborate “rehearsals in the street” in preparation for Carnaval, present weekly shows at CCN and perform at local cultural events in São Luis. I observed Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá Bloco Afro Akomabu rehearse at CCN and perform at Ritmos e Dança no Ilê D’Ode (Encontro de Bandas e Grupos de Dança Afro). And I observed Banda Afro Akomabu Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá perform in collaboration at two local events in São Luis.

In addition to my observations of Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá, I observed Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” and Projeto Quilombo e Resistência Negra (PQRN) make possible preservation and valorization of Afro-Brazilian culture. I observed Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” workshops; drum-making, graffiti, and t-shirt design. And I observed Projeto Quilombo e Resistência Negra (PQRN) carry out a Capoeira workshop with children in the Jacaré quilombo community near Rosaria, Maranhão.

Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu. Every Sunday evening between November and February Bloco Afro Akomabu conducts an elaborate “rehearsal in the street” in local São Luis neighborhood in preparation for Carnaval. These rehearsals are attended by hundreds of CCN militants and Afro-descendants in São Luis.³⁰ I observed three of these “rehearsals in the street.”

³⁰ See ISP Work Journal Observations “2 December, 2007, 5 pm – 8pm, Terreiro de Mae Euzita”

Bloco Afro Akomabu centers each rehearsal around a Candomblé terreiro in a local bairro of São Luis including the Terreiro de Dona Zeca of Bairro de Fátima, the Terreiro de Pai Wander of Liberdade, the Terreiro de Mãe Euzita of Sacavém. Prior to the rehearsal Banda Afro Akomabu warms- up in the terreiro. Following the warm-up, the Banda Afro Akomaba parades through the streets of the bairro. A banner with “Akomabu” and the Akomabu 2007 theme (“Procissão Quilombola em Busca da Paz”) leads the processional followed by Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá and the Banda Afro Akomabu. The Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá dancers dress in costumes fashioned from textile with the Akomabu 2007 theme and dance Afro-Brazilian dances in line formations. The Banda Afro Akomabu includes 30 musicians of various ages (children, teenagers, adults) playing drums and other percussion instruments. Banda Afro Akomabu dresses in costumes fashioned from textile with the Akomabu 2007 theme, Akomabu t-shirts or plain clothes. A rented truck with large speakers and a microphone follows the dancers and band. From the truck’s microphone, a single singer leads the band in CCN composed, African and popular Afro-Brazilian songs. CCN militants accompany Bloco Afro Akomabu as it processes through the streets. Members of the community watch the processional from their homes. Many dance to the music provided by the Banda Afro Akomabu, and sing along to the songs. During the November 25, 2007 rehearsal in the street, the processional stopped, and Socorro Guterres gave a brief speech regarding black identity. At times cars would attempt to pass through the Bloco Afro Akomabu. Undeterred by this, the entire Bloco Afro Akomabu would move to one side of the street as it continued to play instruments, dance and sing. After processing around the bairro Bloco Afro Akomabu returns the terreiro to continue the music and dance at the sight of the terreiro.³¹

³¹ See ISP Work Journal Observations “18 November, 2007, 5 pm- 6:30 pm, Bairro de Fátima (Terreiro de Dona

Every Saturday Banda Afro Akomabu performs shows at CCN in front of the platform stage as a single singer leads the band from the top of the stage. As the band performs CCN composed, African and popular Afro-Brazilian songs, CCN militants and guests dance Afro-Brazilian dances in a line formation. Additionally, CCN militants and guest consume beer and soft drinks served by the Cantina. Following the Show Banda Afro Akomabu, the CCN sound technician plays popular Brazilian music and CCN militants and guest continued dancing Samba and other Afro-Brazilian dance forms.³² On the evening of December 1, 2007, the CCN sound technician played North American pop/rock from the 1980's following the Show Banda Afro Akomabu. This music is popular in the Gay community in Brazil. Several openly gay CCN militants and guests performed feminine dances for the other guests as they took photographs and video with their cellular phones.³³

In addition to Carnaval and CCN Shows, Banda Afro Akomabu aslo performs at local cultural events in the São Luis. I observed Banda Afro Akomabu perform at the “IX Encontro Nacional Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais” (9th Annual National Meeting for Traditional Populations and Communities) and the Unidade Escolar Estado do Rio Grande do Norte. The 9th Annual National Meeting for Traditional Populations and Communities was held in the auditorium of a large modern federal building in Sao Luis. A leader from the Indigenous Movement in Brazil lectured an audience of 75 predominately white listeners dressed in business attire. His lecture provided statistics related to the education of indigenous population. In his presentation he called for increased public policies for the education of indigenous populations

Zeca),” “25 November, 2007, 5:30 pm – 8 pm, Liberdade (Terreiro de Pai Wander),” “2 December, 2007, 5 pm – 8pm, Sacavém (Terreiro de Mãe Euzita)”

³² See ISP Work Journal Observations “24 November, 2007, 10 pm- 2 am, CCN Stage Area”

³³ See ISP Work Journal Observations “1 December, 2007, 8pm- 2 am, CCN Stage/ Cantina Area”

and the increased autonomy of the indigenous community. Following his lecture, he engaged in a brief question and answer session with the audience.

During his lecture five members of Banda Afro Akomabu prepared a table with materials about CCN projects in quilombo communities in the state of Maranhão. After the lecture ended, Maurício Paixão, a CCN General Coordinator, introduced CCN to the audience and briefly spoke about CCN's work in quilombo communities. Then the Banda Afro Akomabu performed a short set of songs for less than twenty minutes. Audience members took CCN materials with them as they left.³⁴

At the Unidade Escolar Estado do Rio Grande do Norte Colegio, Banda Afro Akomabu performed a short set of only 20 minutes for an audience of children and teenagers at this local "colegio." All the students of the school wore t-shirts with the message "A Africa esta em nos" (Africa is in us). As the band performed, initially two to three teachers and several students danced the typical African dance to the music. As the group continued performing a large crowd of students approached the band and danced (jumping up in down, similar to a mosh pit), and sang along. Following the performance the band ate snacks provided by the school.³⁵

Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá. Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá rehearses every Saturday afternoon in a CCN classroom and I observed one of these rehearsals. The three coordinators (Carla, Gilmar, and Henrique), eight dancers, and two musicians were present. Everyone dressed in comfortable (stretchy) street clothes. The men are not wearing shirts, and many of the women have only a sports bra. Carla teaches through demonstration.

Carla taught an intensive dance sequence to the group of extremely sweaty dancers. She taught through demonstration, and did not use traditional dance counts. She counts out the

³⁴ See ISP Work Journal Observations "20 November, 2007, 6 pm – 8 pm, IX Encontro Nacional Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais, Sao Luis 20 a 23 Novembro, 6^A Camara de Coordenacao e Revisao Indios e Minorias"

³⁵ See ISP Work Journal Observations "30 November, 2007, 10:30 am -9 pm, São Luis Historic Centro"

number of times that each dance step is to be performed. While the musicians were playing and the dancers were dancing, Carla would jump in to assist the dancer in memorizing the choreography. The movements that Carla teaches involve hunched shoulders, closeness to the ground, and isolations of the torso.

Following the dance rehearsal, the coordinators sat down with the dancers to discuss the significance of choreography and the logistics of upcoming performances. Carla discussed the lack of black consciousness among Afro-descendants in Maranhão. Carla says that Afro-descendants in Maranhão “don’t have history, don’t have identity,” because they don’t know what black identity is. When speaking, Carla talked with great enthusiasm (intensity in voice and large hand movements). After, the coordinators and dancers discussed the logistics for an upcoming performance. During this discussion the Banda Afro Akomabu began warming up for the evening’s show. The dancers exited the rehearsal and joined the band in dancing.³⁶

On November 17, 2007, I observed Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá perform at Ritmos e Dança no Ilê D’Ode (Encontro de Bandas e Grupos de Dança Afro), a CCN Black Consciousness Week event. The stage area is adorned with two manikins dressed in yellow dresses and adorned with crowns with beads flowing over face, and each held a mirror (symbolizing an orisa). The show included three performances. The first performance featured Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá wearing Akomabu peace textile costumes. Throughout the performance a small girl entered the performance area and danced with the young adults, no one made an effort to stop her. Following the Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá performance, a group of younger girls danced continuously in the same line formation while two men danced throughout the group. The men were dressed in elaborate costumes adorned with raffia. For one song a

³⁶ See ISP Work Journal Observations “24 November, 2007, 6 pm – 10 pm, CCN Secretary’s Office/ CCN Classroom”

dance of young adults dressed in overalls with raffia headdresses performed. Then younger girls returned. Finally younger wearing white flowing skirts and midriff barring floral tube tops performed led by a single male. As they danced several young adults danced Afro-Brazilian dances in line formations behind the performers. Following the conclusion of the formal performance this line dancing continued until the end of the evening.³⁷

Bloco Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá Collaborations. Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá collaborated for two joint performances at the Centro de Cultura João Jose and The Second Annual SESC Display of Quilombo Communities. The Centro de Cultura Joao João is a located near the São Francisco area of São Luis. It consists of a large building with the name of the organization across the front and an adjacent school. In front of the center is a larger sunken in space surrounded by large steps (that serve as seating for performances). The area contains a sound system with several large speakers. Bloco Afro Akomabu performed CCN composed music as Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá danced Afro-Brazilian dances in line formations in the performance area. Banda Afro Akomabu wore matching t-shirts and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá wore white costumes. After the first song, Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá encouraged audience members to join the line formation. More than twenty audience members participated in learning the dances steps. Following the twenty five minute performance the two groups entered into the adjacent school to eat the provided snacks.³⁸

The Second Annual SESC Display of Quilombo Communities, a celebration of cultural manifestations of quilombo communities, occurred at the Casa de Nagô. Casa de Nagô is a terreiro with a small store front, but large area. The performance occurred on the street outside.

³⁷ See ISP Work Journal Observations “17 November, 2007, 8: 30 pm- 2 pm, CCN Stage Area”

³⁸ See ISP Work Journal Observations “27 November, 2007, 6 pm- 9 pm, Centro de Cultura João Jose”

The sound system was directly across from the terreiro. Audience members crowded around the performance area (some sat on the provided benches and chairs others stood inside the terreiro and watched through a window). The he Second Annual SESC Display of Quilombo Communities, a celebration of cultural manifestations of quilombo communities featured two performance groups from quilombo communities. The first two performances, “Maculelede Mulhers/ Povoado do Itamatatiua/ Alcantara” and “Tambor de Crioula/ Povoado Outeiro dos Nogueiras, Itapecuru Mirim,” Each performance group featured its own band. The performers danced in sync wearing similar, if not matching dresses or skirts. Audience members were invited to join in on the second performance (featuring Tambor de Crioula). Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá performed together. Bloco Afro Akomabu wore matching tie dye pants and shirts. Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá wore Akomabu textile clothing. After the first song, Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá encouraged audience members to join in. Additionally, audience members sang along to the songs when the song was recognizable to them.³⁹

Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês.” I visited the Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” graffiti class and then toured the classrooms of the t-shirt screening and drum making activities. I viewed the Project “Sonho dos Erês” graffiti class as they completed a project on the wall to the left of the stage area. There were several cans of spray paints and protective masks near by. The image was of an Afro- descendant male (featuring brown skin, tightly curled hair, flat nose, full lips) with the word “light” in red letters illuminating through his tightly curled hair. Two Projeto “ O Sonho dos Erês” participants were the primary artists, but other participants observed and learned from them. After the completion of the project the artists signed their names below the image and all the participants took a photo in front of the image. Following the graffiti class I

³⁹ See ISP Work Journal Observations “29 November, 2007, 7pm- 10 pm, Casa de Nagô”

participated in a brief tour of the drumming classroom and learned about how Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” creates the drums used by Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu.⁴⁰

Projeto Quilombo e Resistencia Negra (PQRN). I visited Jacaré, a quilombo community near Rosario- MA. CCN visited the community to conduct a capoeira workshop with the children community. Jacaré is a quilombo community of 70 families. The community is a collection of clay homes with grass/ tile roofs connected by dirt roads and walkways. The homes have electricity, but no running water. The stream running throughout the community provides the community with unpurified drinking water. The families also wash clothes, bath and swim in the collected pools of water that are throughout the community. The individual families have various animals including chickens and pigs, and the produce grains (corn and rice) for their consumption. The center of the community is a church and community center (tin- roof covered patio area for gathering).

I participated in the first half of the workshop, and engaged in a tour of the community with one of the woman in a leadership position in the community. The CCN workshop around capoeira for children and adolescents took place in this community center. When we arrived in the early morning, 50-60 women and children were waiting sitting in the community center. Maurício Paixão, a CCN General Coordinator made introductions and briefly spoke about the CCN ideal relationship with this particular quilombo community. CCN intends to address issues around citizenship, public policy and identity according to the community’s wants and needs. The goal for this day was to build black identity around capoeira.

Following these introductions, a capoeira instructor taught the workshop. Some children were eager to participate, but many were reluctant and had to be pushed out into the class by

⁴⁰See ISP Work Journal Observations “23 November, 2007, 7:30 am- 3 pm, CCN Office, CCN”

their mothers. Two to three of the women also participated along with the children. The capoeira instructor started the workshop with the basic jinga step (swaying back and forth). Next he asked everyone to lower himself to the floor and he lead the workshop in strengthening exercises for the leg muscles. Then the capoeira instructor divided the group into two lines. The first person of each line then greeted each other before doing cartwheels down the center of the line. After these activities the group took a break and ate oranges and watermelon.

As the group moved into the second half of the workshop, I was “Maria,” a woman in a leadership role in the community, on a tour of the community. She led me through the pathways of the community and led us to a particular home adjacent to the source of the water. She introduced me to new fruits native to the community. Once we returned to the community center the capoeira workshop was finished. The community then provided lunch for all the CCN militants.⁴¹

Through rehearsals, performances, and workshops CCN preserves and valorizes Afro-Brazilian culture in the presence of Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu, Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá, and Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” participants, other CCN militants, and communities of Afro-descendants in Maranhão. Each opportunity that CCN has to connect Afro-descendants to Afro-Brazilian music, dance and spirituality is an opportunity for Afro-descendants to recognize the vibrancy of their African ancestors. Further, CCN allows Afro-descendants to see themselves as the rightful beneficiaries of Afro-Brazilian history and culture rather than the descendents of slaves. The next step towards engaging Afro-descendant population in black identity formation and racial politics is developing self-esteem with Afro-descendants in Maranhão.

Develop Self-Esteem

⁴¹ See ISP Work Journal Observations “17 November, 2007, 9 am- 3 pm, Jacaré- Quilombo Community”

Although self-esteem is traditionally defined as a confidence in your own merit as an individual,⁴² CCN encourages the collective development of self-esteem among all Afro-descendants in Maranhão. Within the process of identity formation promoted by CCN through Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá, development of self-esteem involves supporting the association between the valorization of Afro-Brazilian culture and contentment among Afro-descendants with their Afro-centric phenotypes. According to a 1976 study by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, Brazilians use over 130 terms to describe skin color.⁴³ Many of these terms, such as “morena” (dark skinned, but not black) and “café-com-leite” (coffee with milk) connote Afro-centric phenotypes while avoiding the acknowledgement of African heritage. This behavior reflects the pejorative connotations of Afro-centric hair texture, shape of lips and noses, and pigmentation of hair and skin. Through the presentation of Afro-Brazilian culture, Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá aims to create a linkage between pride in one’s culture and pride in one’s phenotype.

In order to understand the connection between Afro-Brazilian cultural activities and the development of self-esteem among the Afro-descendant population of Maranhão, I directly discussed self-esteem with Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá participants. I interviewed five participants of a Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá; Fernanda Neris do Nascimento (24), Dievoles R.Nascimento, (19), Lucimar Barros (23), Ivonte dos Santos Selva (22), Robson Wanger N. Prado (18). In these interviews I directly asked each participant of Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá “Do you have more self-esteem now, after joining Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá?” Each of the five participants agreed that their self-esteem increased with participation in Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá. Fernandes and Lucimar offered further elaboration of their increased in self

⁴²Encarta World English Dictionary (Microsoft Word Database), 1998.

⁴³ Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics. “What Color Are You?” in The Brazil Reader: History, Culture, Politics. Durham, ed. Robert M. Levine and John J. Crocitti (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

esteem. Fernandes explained her increase in self esteem as the result of knowing the history and culture of Afro-descendants. Lucimar asserted “I think I am more beautiful.” She then explained that before Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá she had a negative image of her dark skin complexion and used racial terms other than “negra” (Negro) to describe skin complexion. After joining Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá she became more comfortable with her body including her Afro-centric phenotype.⁴⁴ In all, the self-esteem of Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá participants directly linked pride in Afro-Brazilian culture and contentment with Afro-centric phenotypes.

In addition to the five interviews with Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá participants, I directly discussed self-esteem with Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” participants. I participated in two group discussions with Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” participants. Each discussion consisted of a dialogue with twenty or more Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” participants in the setting of the CCN classroom. In each group discussion, I directly asked the Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” participants “Do you have more self-esteem now, after joining Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês?” In each group discussion several participants responded that their self esteem is now strong after joining Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês.” Further, these respondents in each group discussion reflected on their African heritage, especially African religious traditions in Brazil, when discussing their individual self- esteem. During the first group discussion with older teenagers, the question about self esteem sparked a conversation about the Black Soul movement.⁴⁵ The Black Soul movement of the 1970’s was “characterized by ostentatious expressions of black identity in fashion, music, and dance.” This movement reflected the influence of African

⁴⁴ See ISP Work Journal “24 November, 2007, 9 pm – 10 pm, CN Dance Rehearsal Classroom, Grupo Dança Afro Abanja Participants- Fernanda Neris do Nascimento (24), Dievoles R.Nascimento, (19), Lucimar Barros (23), Ivonte dos Santos Selva (22), Robson Wanger N. Prado (18)”

⁴⁵ See ISP Work Journal Interviews “20 November, 2007, 11 am- 12:30 pm, CCN Classroom” and “21 November, 2007, 2- 4 pm, CCN Classroom”

Americans in the United States and sought to popularize the concept “Black is beautiful.”⁴⁶ In all, the self-esteem of Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” participants directly linked pride in Afro-Brazilian culture and contentment with Afro-centric phenotypes.

Through the preservation and valorization of Afro-Brazilian culture, CCN develops self-esteem within Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá, and Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” participants. Further these interviews and discussions with Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá, and Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” participants suggest that the development of self esteem occurs with other CCN militants and communities of Afro-descendants in Maranhão. Self-esteem, or the linkage between pride in Afro-Brazilian culture and contentment with an Afro-centric phenotype, develops with all levels of participation in Afro-Brazilian cultural activities. Audience members at Bloco Banda Afro Akomabu “rehearsals in the street” or Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá performs also have the ability to take pride in their Afro-Brazilian culture and become more content with their Afro-centric phenotypes. With preservation and valorization of Afro-Brazilian culture and development of self-esteem with Afro-descendants, CCN encourages Afro-descendants in Maranhão to construct a black identity and then engage in racial politics.

Construct Black Identity

In *Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, Brazil 1945- 1988*, Michael George Hanchard outlines a specific criterion for interpreting the racial identities of Afro-descendants within and outside the Black Movement in Brazil. Afro-descendants outside the Black Movement potentially demonstrate one of two levels of black identity, faint resemblances or strong resemblances. Faint resemblances occur in response to explicit racial discrimination. Strong resemblances are the polarization of faint resemblances

⁴⁶ Edward E. Telles, *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), Chapter 3 From Racial Democracy to Affirmative Action.

within the context of mass mobilization. Afro-descendants within the Black Movement in Brazil demonstrate a strong resemblance that functions of two dimensions; local and global. The local dimension includes a home grown process of black identity formation specific to the Brazilian context. The global dimension includes an awareness of black identities in other parts of the African Diaspora. Hanchard argues that Afro-descendants within the Black Movement in Brazil participate in racial politics because they are able to relate personal experiences with racial discrimination and racism to a black identity.⁴⁷ Using Hanchard's criterion for interpreting the racial identities of Afro-descendants within the Black Movement, I sought out evidence of strong resemblances, or polarized faint resemblances with the context of mass mobilization, during my interviews and groups discussions with Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá and Projeto "Sonho dos Erês" participants.

Personal Experiences with Racial Discrimination and Racism. Hanchard suggests that faint resemblances form in response to discriminatory practices or a consciousness of racism. Therefore in each interview or discussion with Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá and Projeto "Sonho dos Erês" participants I directly asked the participants "Have your experienced racism?" All the Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá participants and several respondents in the two group discussions with Projeto "Sonho dos Erês" declared that they have experienced racism and described specific experiences of racial discrimination in São Luis. Several students offered a story of racist's incidents in stores, on public buses, and at school. One respondent recalled his first experience with racism being at the age of nine years old. All the participants agreed that racism

⁴⁷ Michael George Hanchard, *Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1945- 1988.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), Chapter 5 Formation of Racial Consciousness.

is a prevalent phenomenon in São Luis.⁴⁸ The Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá and Projeto “Sonho dos Erês” participants confirmed their faint resemblance with their consciousness of racism.

Black Identity. Hanchard further suggests that strong resemblances are polarized faint resemblances within the context of mass mobilization. Therefore, in each interview with Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá participants and in one of the group discussions with Projeto “Sonho dos Erês” participants I also directly asked the participants “What is your race/ complexion/ ethnicity?” All the Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá identified as Afro-descendants.⁴⁹ In the group discussion with Projeto “Sonho dos Erês” this question sparked a group discussion. The Projeto “Sonho dos Erês” participants explained that they regularly discuss black identity including black history, culture and politics in the Projeto “Sonho dos Erês” workshops. The Projeto “Sonho dos Erês” participants then reflected on the numerous terms that exist to describe skin complexion in Brazil. The specific terms that were discussed include “Negro,” “preta,” “moreno,” and other terms like “café com leite.” According to the The Projeto “Sonho dos Erês” participants “Negro” and “preto” have negative connotations. Further many Afro-descendants in Brazil believe that identifying as “Negro” or “preto” leads to racial discrimination. Therefore these individuals use “moreno” and other terms like “café com leite” to describe their skin complexion. The Projeto “Sonho dos Erês” emphasized that these two terms are simply descriptive and do not function as identities.⁵⁰ The Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá and Projeto

⁴⁸ See ISP Work Journal Interviews “20 November, 2007, 11 am- 12:30 pm, CCN Classroom” and “21 November, 2007, 2- 4 pm, CCN Classroom”

⁴⁹ See ISP Work Journal Interviews “24 November, 2007, 9 pm – 10 pm, CN Dance Rehearsal Classroom, Grupo Dança Afro Abanja Participants- Fernanda Neris do Nascimento (24), Dievoles R.Nascimento, (19), Lucimar Barros (23), Ivonte dos Santos Selva (22), Robson Wanger N. Prado (18)”

⁵⁰ See ISP Work Journal Interviews “20 November, 2007, 11 am- 12:30 pm, CCN Classroom” and “21 November, 2007, 2- 4 pm, CCN Classroom” “24 November, 2007, 9 pm – 10 pm, CN Dance Rehearsal Classroom, Grupo Dança Afro Abanja Participants- Fernanda Neris do Nascimento (24), Dievoles R.Nascimento, (19), Lucimar Barros (23), Ivonte dos Santos Selva (22), Robson Wanger N. Prado (18)”

“Sonho dos Erês” participants confirmed their strong resemblances with their black identification and participation in CCN, an organization within the Black Movement in Brazil.

Through Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá and various other programs, CCN preserves and valorizes Afro-Brazilian culture, develops the self-esteem of Afro-descendants, and constructs black identity with Afro-descendants in Maranhão. The preservation and valorization of Afro-Brazilian culture, developing self-esteem about Afro-descendants, and constructing a black identity with Afro-descendants are the first steps in the process that ends with engaging Afro-descendants in racial politics. CCN constructs black identity through Afro-Brazilian cultural activities and this process of black identity formation constitutes racial politics in São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil.

Engage in Racial Politics

From my observations of Bloco Afro Akomabu, Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês,” and Projeto Quilombo e Resistência Negra (PQRN) rehearsals, performances and workshops, and interviews or group discussions with Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá and Projeto “O Sonho dos Erês” participants I assembled the process of black identity formation promoted by CCN through its cultural activities. To link the aforementioned process with the engagement of Afro-descendants in racial politics, I interviewed two leaders of the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão; Maurício Paixão, a current CCN General Coordinator, Carlos Beditio and a former CCN president. Maurício Paixão has served as a CCN General Coordinator for three years and was a CCN militant for seven years prior. Carlos Beditio is a Professor of Anthropology at the Federal University of Maranhão. He has served as a CCN militant for over 25 years, formally as CCN president and currently as a Bloco e Banda Afro

Akomabu singer. From the interviews I gained the perspectives of CCN leadership on the process black identity formation and the participation of Afro-descendants in racial politics.

CCN Leadership on Black Identity Formation. According to Prof. Carlos Benedito Afro-Brazilian culture including music, dance and spirituality is black identity in Sao Luis, Maranhao. He emphasized the importance of reggae music in the process of black identity formation among young Afro-descendants in Sao Luis. Reggae is an African influenced musical from of Jamaica. Reggae enables young Afro-descendants in Sao Luis to interact with the sounds and images of other black populations within the African Diaspora in the New World. Although Prof. Benedito recognizes the global influences on process of black identity formation in Sao Luis, he unambiguously stated that it is the ultimate responsibility of Black Movement NGO's like CCN to organize Afro-descendants of all ages, from children to adults. The common image of black identity in Brazil is no positive. "Miscegenation is Brazilian identity," Prof. Beneditio says and this ideology limits the formation of a popular black identity. The Brazil Movement must work to construct a popular black identity in order to redress this racist's structures in Brazil.⁵¹

Maurício Paixão argeed that the common image of black identity in Brazil is not positive. "Racism is very strong, and black consciousness is very small," says Mr.Paixão. CCN and other organization within the Black Movement in Brazil must work harder to construct a poupopular black identity. Mr.Paixão explained that Brazilian society uses the numerous terms for describing skin color to limit the formation of black identity. Although numerous terms such as Negro, Afro-descedant, Afro-Brazilian reflect an assertive black identity, other terms such as "moreno" and "café com leite" undermine the process of black identity formation.⁵²

⁵¹ See ISP Work Journal Interviews "26 November, 2007, 10: 30 am – 11:30 am, CCN Library Prof. Carlos Beneditio"

⁵² See ISP Work Journal Interviews "26 November, 2007, 3:45 pm- 4: 30 pm, CCN Office, Maurício Paixão"

CCN Leadership on Racial Politics. Mr.Paixão further explained the connection between black identity formation through cultural activities and racial politics. Mr.Paixão explained that According to Mr.Paixão, CCN is the Black Movement in Sao Luis and Maranhão. CCN is the central organization to facilitate racial politics, or the participation of the Afro-descendants in efforts to secure publics for the Afro-descendant population, in Maranhão. Before the formation of CCN, a space for racial politics did not exist in Maranhão. In explaining the role of Bloco Akomabu and Grupo Dança Afro Abanjá in racial politics, Mr.Paixão stated, “Bloco Akomabu and Grupo Dança Afro Abanjá contribute to the formation of Black identity.” He believes that the black population of Maranhão is in search of education about Afro-Brazilian history and culture because education about Afro-Brazilian history and culture continues to be vastly inaccessible by millions of Afro-descendants in the public schools and universities of Maranhão. Bloco Akomabu and Grupo Dança Afro Abanjá by preserving and valorizing Afro-Brazilian culture in turn educate the Afro-descendant population of Maranhão. The songs of Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu contain messages related to resistance and struggle. Through Carnival, “rehearsals in the street,” CCN Shows and performances at local cultural events in Sao Luis Bloco Akomabu and Grupo Dança Afro Abanjá enter into the communities of the black population and connect with Afro-descendants. The black population is then able to see CCN preserving and valorizing their culture through Bloco Akomabu and Grupo Dança Afro Abanjá. These cultural activities are an important part of the Black Movement and directly lead to public policies for the black population.⁵³

The Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão develops black identity through cultural activities such as music, dance and spirituality, and that this process of black identity formation

⁵³ See ISP Work Journal Interviews “26 November, 2007, 3:45 pm- 4: 30 pm, CCN Office, Maurício Paixão”

through cultural activities constitutes racial politics in São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil. Further, Afro-descendants in São Luis, Maranhão more frequently participate in racial politics through black identity formation within cultural activities because few, if any, spaces for racial politics exist outside of the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão, and similar Black Movement NGO's. In São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil, black identity formation and racial politics occur in the realm of Afro-Brazilian culture (i.e. music, dance, religion) and outside the realm of formal channels of representative democracy.

Implications for Further Research

The current investigation of black identity in São Luis, Maranhão suggests important consequences for the Black Movement in Brazil and significant opportunities for collaborative work between Afro-Brazilians and other communities within the African Diaspora. This research regarding the process of black identity formation in São Luis, Maranhão may be duplicated in other cities and regions of Brazil in order to generalize its conclusions. Do other NGO's within the Black Movement in Brazil utilize Afro-Brazilian cultural activities such as music, dance, and spirituality to preserve and valorize Afro-Brazilian culture, develop self-esteem with Afro-descendants, construct black identity, and engage Afro-descendants in racial politics? And, do these NGO's within the Black Movement in Brazil require a certain concentration of Afro-descendants within the specific city or region in order to facilitate a similar process of black identity formation? Through a comparative study of black identity in the different regions of Brazil, the Black Movement in Brazil may develop a more detailed understanding of the obstacles that lay in way of a mass mobilization of Afro-descendants in Brazil. Further, studies of black identity and mass mobilizations of Afro-descendants throughout the entire African Diaspora offer the same potential assistance to the Black Movement in Brazil.

Conclusion

In São Luis, Maranhão, black identity is Afro-Brazilian cultural activities such as music, dance, and spirituality. And the process black identity formation that the the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão promotes through Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu and Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá is a process of preserving and valorizing of Afro-Brazilian culture, developing self-esteem with Afro- descendants, constructing a black identity with Afro-descendants and finally engaging Afro- descendants in racial politics. The Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão develops black identity through cultural activities such as music, dance and spirituality, and that this process of black identity formation through cultural activities constitutes racial politics in São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil. Further, Afro- descendants in São Luis, Maranhão more frequently participate in racial politics through black identity formation within cultural activities because few, if any, spaces for racial politics exist outside of the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão, and similar Black Movement NGO's. In São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil, black identity formation and racial politics occur in the realm of Afro-Brazilian culture (i.e. music, dance, religion) and outside the realm of formal channels of representative democracy.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Carlos Benedito
Professor of Anthropology UFMA
Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão (CCN)
Rua dos Guaranis s/n- Bares- Joao Paulo- Caixa Postal, 430
CEP: 65040-630- São Luis- MA

Lucimar Barros
Grupo Dança Afro Abanjá
Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão (CCN)
Rua dos Guaranis s/n- Bares- Joao Paulo- Caixa Postal, 430
CEP: 65040-630- São Luis- MA

Antonio Henrique França Costa
Grupo Dança Afro Abanjá Coordinator
Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão (CCN)
Rua dos Guaranis s/n- Bares- Joao Paulo- Caixa Postal, 430
CEP: 65040-630- São Luis- MA

Dievoles R. Nascimento
Grupo Dança Afro Abanjá
Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão (CCN)
Rua dos Guaranis s/n- Bares- Joao Paulo- Caixa Postal, 430
CEP: 65040-630- São Luis- MA

Fernanda Neris do Nascimento
Grupo Dança Afro Abanjá
Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão (CCN)
Rua dos Guaranis s/n- Bares- Joao Paulo- Caixa Postal, 430
CEP: 65040-630- São Luis- MA

Raimundo Maurício Matos Paixão
CCN General Coordinator
Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão (CCN)
Rua dos Guaranis s/n- Bares- Joao Paulo- Caixa Postal, 430
CEP: 65040-630- São Luis- MA

Robson Wanger N. Prado
Grupo Dança Afro Abanjá
Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão (CCN)
Rua dos Guaranis s/n- Bares- Joao Paulo- Caixa Postal, 430
CEP: 65040-630- São Luis- MA

Projeto “Sonho dos Erês”
Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão (CCN)
Rua dos Guaranis s/n- Bares- Joao Paulo- Caixa Postal, 430
CEP: 65040-630- São Luis- MA

Ivonte dos Santos Selva
Grupo Dança Afro Abanjá
Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão (CCN)
Rua dos Guaranis s/n- Bares- Joao Paulo- Caixa Postal, 430
CEP: 65040-630- São Luis- MA

Fatima Viera
Bloco e Banda Afro Akomabu
Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão (CCN)
Rua dos Guaranis s/n- Bares- Joao Paulo- Caixa Postal, 430
CEP: 65040-630- São Luis- MA

Secondary Sources

Butler, K. (1998). *Ginga Baiana- The Politics of Race, Class, Culture and Power in Salvador*. In Kraay, H. (Ed.), Afro-Brazilian Culture and Politics: Bahia, 1790’s to 1990’s (pp. 158-173). New York: M.E. Sharp.

Barcelos, L.C. (1999). *Struggling in Paradise: Racial Mobilization and the Contemporary Black Movement in Brazil*. In Reichmann, R. (Ed.), *Race in Contemporary Brazil: From Indifference to Inequality* (pp. 155-166). University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão. (2006). “XXV Semana da Consciencia Negra No Maranhao, Valeu Zumbi, 20 de Novembro- Dia Nacional da Consciencia Negra.” São Luis, Maranhão.

Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão. (2006). Sistema de Gestao. Sao Luis, Maranhão.

Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá. (2005). Publicação do Grupo de Dança Afro Abanjá do Centro de Cultra Negra do Maranhão, pp. 3-6.

Hanchard, M.G. (1994). Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1945- 1988. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Teles dos Santos, J. (1998). *A Mixed- Race Nation: Afro Brazilians and Cultural Policy and Bahia 1970-1990*. In Kraay, H. (Ed.), Afro-Brazilian Culture and Politics: Bahia, 1790’s to 1990’s (pp. 117-133). New York: M.E. Sharp.

Telles, E. E. (2004). Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil. Princeton University Press. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

ISP Appendix

1. Could you have done this project in the USA? What data or sources were unique to the culture in which you did your project?

The methods of the current research relate to the context of São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil, and more specifically the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão. All the observations regarding the process of black identity formation in São Luis, Maranhão rely upon Afro-Brazilian cultural activities. And all the interviews reflect the opinions of Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão militants in São Luis, Maranhão.

2. Could you have done any part of it in the USA? Would the results have been different? How?

As previously stated, the methods of the current research relate to the context of São Luis, Maranhão, Brazil, and more specifically the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão. The divergent histories of the United States and Brazil created two distinct varieties of black identity formation. In Brazil, the complexities surrounding the ideology of a racial democracy limited the construction of a popular black identity and a mass mobilization of Afro-descendants. This history facilitated the development of a pattern of black identity formation that is unique to Brazil. Afro-descendants in Brazil construct black identity and participate in racial politics through Afro-Brazilian cultural activities. A study of black identity in the United States would yield different results that reflect the history of race and racial ideology in the United States.

3. Did the process of doing the ISP modify your learning style? How was this different from your previous style and approaches to learning?

During the ISP period, I drastically modified my learning style. Previously, I focused my academic attention towards memorizing and retaining factual information in order to draw connections between material. But the process of investigating black identity in São Luis, Maranhão required a deeper level of commitment. The ISP required me to move beyond drawing connections between sources of pre-existing information. Instead I had to seek out novel sources of information and discover the meaning of that information for myself.

4. How much of the final monograph is primary data? How much is from secondary sources?

Two-thirds of the final monograph reflects personal observations and interviews and one-quarter reflects facts and theories from secondary sources.

5. What criteria did you use to evaluate data for inclusion in the final monograph? Or how did you decide to exclude certain data?

I analyzed the data through the lens of four themes (preservation and valorization of Afro-Brazilian culture, the self-esteem of Afro-descendants, black identity, and racial politics).

These themes emerged from personal reflects in my ISP Field Work Journal. When evaluating data, I read the observations and transcriptions of interviews for links to these four themes. I omitted data that did not directly relate to one of these four themes from the final monograph.

6. How did the “drop-offs” of field exercises contribute to the process and completion of the ISP?

The most beneficial preparatory exercise was the Community Project. During the time that I spent with the Centro de Cultra Afrocearence, I developed the vocablulary for discussing concepts associated with black identity.

7. What part of the MTFSS most significantly influenced the ISP process?

The discussion of ethics in the field was more benefical and greatly influenced by development of interiview quesitions. Racial identity is a sensitive topic throughout the world and especially in Brazil. With a strong ethical foundation, I was able to avoid inserting by North American bias into my interview questions. Consquently, I provoked interesting reflection on black identity from my interviewees that would not have otherwise been possible.

8. What were the principal problems you encountered while doing the ISP? Were you able to resolve these and how?

During the ISP period, I did not encounter any significant problems. I was physically and mentally exhausted throughout the entire ISP period, but I was unable to resolve this particular issue. I lived with a the Project Coordinator of Bloco Afro Akomabu and therefore oppertunities for observations rarely ceased.

9. Did you experience any time constraints? How could these have been resolved?

I did not experience any significant time restaints. If given a greater period of time with Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão I would have developed the sample size of my ethnographic research and conducted more interviews. The current data that I have did not limit my ability to draw conclusion about black identity in São Luis, Maranhão.

10. Did you orignial topic change and evolved as you dsicovered or did not discover new and different resources?

No, my topic did not change. My original problem statement was appropariate for the context of my ISP.

11. How did you go about finding resources: institutions, interviewees, publications, etc?

During the ISP period, I lived with the Project Coordinator of Bloco Afro Akomabu. I accompanied her to the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão each week day, and attended all Bloco Afro Akomabu performances with her. Further, she and my Project Advisor introduced me to large number of Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão militants.

12. What method(s) did you use? How did you decide to use such method(s)?

Through a conversation with Prof. Eduardo and Prof. Bill Calhoun, we determined that observations and participation in Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão cultural activities and interviews with Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão leaders and participants would allow me to investigate black identity in São Luis, Maranhão

13. Comment on you relations with your advisor: indispensable? Ocasionaly helpful? Not very helpful? At what point was he or she most helpful? Wer there cultural differences, which influenced you reationship? A different undersanding of educational processes and goals? Was working with the advisor instructional?

My Project Advisor was only accesssible during one week of my ISP period. During the other two weeks, he was out of São Luis, Maranhão. Therefore he was only mildly helpful in terms of assisting me with interpretations of collected data. He did, however, serve as an influential contact. Being a General Coordinator of CCN, he was able to provide valuable insight into the views of Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão leadership regarding black identity formation.

14. Did you reach any dead ends? Hypothesis which turned out to be not useful? Interview or visits that had no application?

Everything I observed or participated in directly related to black identity São Luis, Maranhão. In turn, I developed a criterion for eliminating information in order to make writing the monograph more manageable.

15. What insights did you gain into the culture as a result of doing the ISP, which you might not otherwise have gained?

I gained insights into Afro-Brazilian culture. Before I only functioned as a observer of Afro-Brazilian culture. Through my ISP, I became a participant. Without access to numerous Afro-Brazilian culture events, the divide between Afro-Brazilians and myself that I previously felt would have persisted.

16. Did the ISP proces assist you adjustment to the culture? Integration?

I do not believe that I became integrated into Brazilian culture. I am a still a North American. But my understanding of Brazilian culture grew.

17. What were the principal lessons you learned from the ISP process?

The principal lesson that I learned was to value mundane experiences. In traditional library research any given sentence of a book does not have the potential to greatly influence your thesis. But in ethnographic research, the smallest detail about a single individual's life has the potential to greatly impact the findings of the research.

18. If you met a future student who wanted to do this same project, what would be your recommendation to him/her?

I recommend that he or she fully embrace the opportunity to converse with Afro-Brazilians about US and Brazilian race, race relations, black identity and culture. Their value will become an indispensable aspect of your experience in Brazil.

19. Given what you know now, would you undertake this, or a similar project again?

Yes, and I would conduct my research with greater enthusiasm. The ISP allowed me to experience the satisfaction of developing original ideas from novel sources of information. I will approach future projects with an understanding of its potential rewards.