

## **The black population in a Brazilian citizen: invisibility, culture and resistance**

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The purpose of this work is to show the history and socio-economical and cultural condition of the black people in the city of Londrina (the second largest city in the State of Paraná and a reference for its social, economical, cultural e political relevance, characterized by ethnical heterogeneity with the presence of immigrants and their descendents and by those called “Brazilian”), in the State of Paraná, Brazil. The reason for this study lies, mainly, in the fact that the official history does not account for evidences of their socio-economical condition and the life experiences of some of the people who were interviewed for a research to be concluded in December 2008.

### **1 – The Negro in the city: a presence denied**

In the city of Londrina, as well as in other regions, the “invisibility” of the Negro has been used as a strategy to whiten the population. Within this context, any city, which intended to become a symbol of development, could not take into account, in its history, something – as the negro was understood throughout the XXth Century – that could mean a delay and a sign of no progress<sup>1</sup>. Probably, the same may be the case of the “Little London”<sup>2</sup>. That explains the absence of the Negro in the official records of the city. Nevertheless, their presence can be verified through the stories told by the descendents of the first negroes who came to this city<sup>3</sup>. The history of the Black population, since the foundation of Londrina, can be seen in the photograph albums of the families. Sponsored by the Town Hall of Londrina, Idalto José de Almeida published his book *Presença negra em Londrina*, in 2004. The book presents statements and small reports about important Black people in the city<sup>4</sup>.

Some newspapers, mainly those from 1988, the year for the celebration of the Slavery Abolition Centennial, published articles about the negroes in the city motivated

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<sup>1</sup> SILVA, Maria Nilza e Pires Laranjeira. “Do problema da ‘raça’ às políticas de Ação Afirmativa”. In. PACHECO, Jairo Q. e SILVA, Maria Nilza. *O negro na universidade: o direito à inclusão*. Fundação Cultural Pmares: Brasília, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Londrina or Little London is a homage to the Englishmen who owned the land company ‘Companhia de Terras do Paraná’ by the time of the colonization of the city.

<sup>3</sup> These documents are part of the material being used in the on-going research “Território e segregação urbana: o lugar da população negra em Londrina”.

<sup>4</sup> This is the first record that can be considered in the history of the Negro in Londrina.

by the Black community movement with cultural manifestation and awareness of perverse inequality experienced by the Black population throughout the Brazilian history. More recently, since 2004, the Negroes in Londrina could be seen in the local media as a result of affirmative actions taken by the State University of Londrina.<sup>5</sup>

The Black Movement in the city of Londrina has had a long fight against racism, discrimination and inequalities. Although very different from what is known today, since 1940's the negroes have been meeting and acting in several associations whose dynamism and hardships will be shown here.

## **2 – The reality denied**

The history of the Negro in Brazil shows that there has been no concern about their integration in the process of formation of class societies and socio-economical development<sup>6</sup>, during the post-abolition period. The official history<sup>7</sup> of the city of Londrina does not account for the presence of the black population in its colonization period. Studies made by researchers such as Florestan Fernandes, Costa Pinto, Thales de Azevedo in the field of racial relations in the Brazil, within the context of a UNESCO<sup>8</sup> project, since late 1970's, and by several other researchers (Carlos Hasenbalg, etc.), give us a theoretical foundation for our approach with the use of socio-economical indices (Census 2000 by Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística - IBGE, where the negro population<sup>9</sup> was 21.74%), interviews to collect life histories and to analyze their ways of life and cultural forms of action. These data have shown that the Black population, according to our partial results, has been relegated and stigmatized by a history which highlights racism and poverty very similar to the history of negroes in other regions of this country.

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<sup>5</sup> Conf.: SILVA (2008).

<sup>6</sup> Conf. Florestan Fernandes & Roger Bastide (1955).

<sup>7</sup> No reference to the Black population or to Black pioneers was found in books about the formation of the city.

<sup>8</sup> Studies sponsored by the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture– UNESCO, whose primary objective was to show the world the example of Brazil as a country where racial relations were harmonious whereas the rest of the world was suffering the horrible consequences of World War II and the race was a reference for genocide. The results of such studies were published in the 1950's and did not confirm any harmonious relation between black and white people in Brazil but a country of great inequalities. Conf. MAIO, 1998, p. 375-413.

<sup>9</sup> Negroes is a cumulative of blacks and browns, as a category used by IBGE. In some instances category non-black will be used to refer to the other groups of color/race, predominantly represented by the white group.