"*Millie Gone to Brazil*": Barbadian migration to Brazil in the early 20th century[1]

Elaine P. Rocha and Frederick Alleyne

Millie gone to Brazil
Oh Lawd, poor Millie
Millie gone to Brazil
Oh Lawd, poor Millie
Wid de wire wrap round she waist
And the razor cut up she face
Wid de wire wrap round she waist
And the razor cut up she face

Millie down in the well
Oh Lawd, poor Millie
Millie down in the well
Oh Lawd, poor Millie
Wid de wire wrap round she waist
And the razor cut up she face
Wid de wire wrap round she waist
And the razor cut up she face[1]

These are the lyrics of a popular Barbadian folk songs, dated from the early 1920s. Although it tells the fate of a woman murdered by her husband, which according to the tradition is a true story, it is a lively song. The popular tale explains that Millie was about to leave her abusive husband when she was killed and her corpse hidden in a well not far from Bridgetown. To explain her sudden disappearance, the husband told everybody that Millie had gone to Brazil, until the strong odor revealed the location of her body.

The idea of somebody leaving Barbados and "disappearing" after going to Brazil was quite familiar at a time when many Barbadians were boarding ships to Brazil in pursuit of a better life between 1900 and 1930. With scant information on life in Brazil, many people sailed with dreams of a country of jungle and gold, a place to find fortune, overcome poverty and come back home for a better life. But what did the Barbadians find when they arrived in Brazilian territory?

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Life for Blacks in Brazil at the turn of the 20th century was not easy. Brazil was the last nation in the American continent to abolish slavery, with the elite managing to postpone abolition until 1888. For the Brazilian slave, freedom came in different waves, and assumed different meanings, through individual manumissions and runaway communities, until laws like the free womb law (1871), and the "*Lei dos Sexagenários*", which granted freedom for those over 65 years old (1885), up until the definitive document of liberation.

Abolitionist ideas and campaigns reached Brazilians relatively late during the second half of the nineteenth century, mainly during the 1870s; and they arrived at the same time as did scientific racism and the politics of eugenics. The rise of resistance to slavery had contributed to consolidate the image of the *black peril*, or the black criminal, that jeopardized the accepted way of life, as well as the future of Brazil as a modern nation. At the same time, increasing urbanization led to higher numbers of female and male slaves living in the cities, away from the master's strict control. As a result, the approach of abolition brought an increase of laws for social control and a reinforcement of police forces.

Politically, the elites were utterly divided over the issue, with some liberals defending the introduction of paid work, involving the use of European immigrants, and the old oligarchy arguing that without the slaves the plantation economy would not survive and the Brazilian economy would undergo a dreadful crisis. The end of slavery in Brazil brought about the import of immigrant workers, the end of the monarchy and the beginning of the republican regime (1889), inaugurating a new era in which Afro-Brazilians, now rejected by the new economy, would face marginalization, poverty, criminalization and invisibility.

The delayed abolition of slavery in Brazil occurred at the same time as the rise of theories of pseudo-scientific racism that justified and confirmed the inferiority of Blacks. These theories were present during the earliest debates (around 1860) about importation of immigrant workers into Brazil, as analyzed by Celia Marinho Azevedo and Thomas Skidmore[2] who pointed out that the central point of the argument in favor of European immigrants was their superiority, not only over Blacks but over Brazilians in general. It also reinforced the stereotypes of instability, criminality, and laziness associated with the black population.[3]

During the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century, Latin American societies found in the racial debate that emphasized social and racial hierarchy the theoretical argument to justify and reinforce the need to exercise close control over the former slaves and all people of African descent. In Brazil, as in other countries, these ideologies soon took on popular form, and were found in newspapers, school books, magazines, etc., being soon part of the daily life in ways that constituted the basis of Brazilian culture. The racist propaganda favouring white (immigrant) workers also contributed to the ban on other immigrants like Chinese, Indians or Africans. In the words of George Andrews:

> Facing insistent demands from their former slaves for new work regimens – shorter and more flexible hours, no work for women or children, increased autonomy and freedom from direct supervision – employers responded by seeking out alternative sources of workers. These could easily have come from within Latin American societies themselves, but dictates of scientific racism, combined with the availability of millions of European workers ready and willing to leave their native lands, led governments to invest state funds not in locally born non-whites but in European immigrants.[4]

The first republican constitution of 1890 brought a decree on immigration that specified that Asian and African immigrants were not freely granted entry in Brazil, and could only be admitted by authorization of the National Congress, and that diplomatic and consular agents and the police of the ports should prevent the disembarkation of those individuals, as well as beggars and indigents.[5]

The European immigration was sponsored by some farmers who opted to substitute Black workers for immigrants, and by governments from south-eastern and southern states, with some support from the federal government. This was because at the end of the 19th century, the great economic development was in coffee production, concentrated in the south-eastern states, while the southern states claimed a need for colonists. In these southern states – and in a few others – groups of Italians, Germans, Spanish and Polish, among others, received land in unexploited areas in which they were to develop farms, a right denied to Brazilians on the excuse that European immigrants were better workers and would be able to bring civilization to those distant regions.

The other side of the policies of immigration is found in the ideology of whitening. The Brazilian intellectual's interpretation of the racist ideologies was that

miscegenation would give the local population a racial "upgrade", making them whiter by generations and in a few years (the numbers would change according to the politician or scientist) Brazil would be predominantly white. Those theories supposed that the European immigrant would marry darker Brazilians and that the choice of marrying lighter would erase the Black population. The ultimate result of this strategy would be civilization and modernization that would bring Brazil closer to the European countries. The desirable miscegenation was not only physical, but cultural.[6]

During the first forty years of the Brazilian republic (1890-1930), when once again the government claimed to have a programme of modernization, many Europeans moved from the rural areas to towns and cities, seeking a better life away from the demands of farming or the difficulties of isolated areas. The efforts towards progress coincided with the apex of the thesis of scientific racism, and the immigrant workers found jobs in the recently opened industries.

As for the northern regions, there was not enough money to import workers to those areas, except for Japanese immigrants, and the Union government to stimulate internal migration frequently resorted to moving people from drought stricken northeastern states to the states of Amazonas and Pará and the territories of Rondonia, Roraima, Acre and Amapá, a policy that lasted until the 1970s.

The *seringais*[7] of Amazonas were also the destination of unwanted people during the first decades of the republic. In 1906, black sailors in Rio de Janeiro rebelled against the Brazilian Navy authorities that denied them higher posts and maintained corporal punishments. The sailors received popular support but the government betrayed the agreement made with them and sent the rebels to prison or into exile as forced labour in the Amazon. About two hundred sailors convicted during the revolt and who made the long trip from Rio de Janeiro to Amazonas in the terrible conditions were offered to the railway company that was constructing the Madeira-Mamoré railroad in Rondônia, but were not accepted given their poor health. Some *seringalistas*, the entrepreneurs who invested in the rubber extraction, took those who appeared to be in reasonable physical conditions to work. Along with the rebels, were 292 others convicted of idleness and 44 prostitutes.[8] Before that, in 1904, a popular riot against the mandatory vaccination imposed upon the population of Rio de Janeiro also ended with hundreds of those involved sentenced to exile in the

Amazon region. Some of them went to the *seringais*, some were employed in the construction of the railroad Madeira-Mamoré, in Rondônia. According to scholars like Francisco Bento da Silva, they were people from the lowest class, not exactly criminals, but also not citizens. Many of them died during the trip, others arrived there without being registered, not even named by official documents.[9]

As stated by Barbara Weinstein[10] and Warren Dean[11], during the rubber boom, people from different parts of Brazil and from other countries went to the Amazon, with a predominance of those from the Northeast recruited by the government. The main characteristic among the Brazilian workers was poverty, whether they were agricultural workers put out of work and displaced by the droughts that affected north-eastern states, or unwanted people from Rio de Janeiro. In a country in which abolition was fairly recent, poor people were never in shortage. The lack of governmental control and the characteristics of that vast region made it impossible to keep track of all the workers and adventurers who took the risks associated with living in such a hostile environment, and immigrants from neighbouring countries were among them.

Another important characteristic of the Amazon occupation is that, unlike what happened in the other regions of Brazil, there were no official projects for colonization until around the 1940s. Working on a product of extraction, the rubber workers were expected to produce as much as possible, which implied moving from place to place enduring very difficult working conditions. The demand for infra-structure and urban planning, as well as for labour regulations came later to meet the needs of existing villages.[12]

Cledenice Blackman registered the testimonies of descendants of West Indian immigrants who for a long time were believed to have arrived in Rondonia during the construction of the railroad, showing that many had actually moved to that region coming from the state of Amazonas. That is the case of Mr. Arthur Winter's father, who moved from Manaus (capital of Amazonas state) to Porto Velho (Rondônia) in 1925 to work at the Estrada de Ferro Madeira-Mamoré.[13]

The railroad project was in fact started in 1870, in response to the interest of the rubber traders in gaining access to the Atlantic coast. According to Lucia

Lamounier, the challenges involved in such an isolated region interfered with the progress of the project and determined the type of worker needed for it to succeed, with preference given to those who had no place to go in a situation of crisis as opposed to local workers who would often leave the construction site to work on their small farms or to join those who combined hunting, fishing, farming and collecting latex for rubber as a means of surviving in the region:

> ... a great number of workers were imported to build the Madeira-Mamoré. The inhospitable conditions of the area made very acute the labour problem. At the beginning of the 1870s the engineers reported food deprivation, fevers and Indian attacks; the company in charge revoked the contract in 1873. That was just the beginning of other frustrated attempts to build the railway. In 1907 the American Company May, Jekill & Randolph started to build the road. The company had just finished a contract to build a railway in Cuba, in which they had employed circa 4,000 Galician workers accustomed to rough conditions. The company decided to bring them along to the Madeira region. From 1907 to 1912 were imported 21,783 workers, from all nationalities, the majority from the neighbouring Caribbean Islands.[14]

The so called "Barbadians" started to arrive in the Amazon around the end of the nineteenth-century, probably coming through the British Guyana, trying to find their place among the *seringais* or, after a few years, to work in the construction of the Madeira-Mamoré Railway. Those strange foreigners were identified mostly because of one unexpected trace: they were Blacks. It was only about fifteen years after abolition, and they would face the same problems related to prejudice and exclusion that Blacks in Brazil did, unless they could prove themselves different from the national Blacks.

Black immigrants

During the first thirty years of the new century, Brazil saw increased intellectual production on race in the country, the most important focus of this production was the views of Blacks as a physical, intellectual, social and culturally different racial group. Authors such as Nina Rodrigues – a medical doctor very influenced by the ideas of Gobineau[15] and Lombroso[16] that reinforced the thesis of the biological inferiority of Africans[17] – and Oliveira Vianna, who defended the idea that Brazilian society would become white after many generations of Blacks and coloreds marrying lighter partners,[18] – had a major influence on sociological and anthropological ideas during the first half of the twentieth century. This theory, with many variations presented by other authors and prevalent in the media, is called "the ideology of whitening" and, although developed in the first decades of the 20th century, conforms to the Brazilian cultural history that has always benefited those with lighter skin.

The Brazilian government had successfully imposed a barrier against the immigration of Africans and the descendants of Africans. In this matter, the first legislative challenge took place between the 1850s and 60s, when some representatives of the United States government presented a proposal to move free Black people from the United States to Amazon state in Brazil. The project was proposed as a solution for problems in both countries: it would help to occupy and colonize the Amazon, in need of a labour force, and it would solve the problem of racial conflicts in a United States in the midst of the Civil War. The idea was rejected by Brazilians, who expressed concerns about receiving African-Americans in a period when the question of slavery in Brazil was very sensitive. The government also saw in this situation the pressure to support the northern colonies of the United States in their Civil War and declined any involvement, opting for neutrality.[19]

On another occasion, in 1921, a group of African-Americans intended to emigrate to Brazil, supported by the Brazilian-American Colonization Syndicate which planned to buy land in the state of Mato Grosso, in the central part of Brazil to accommodate the families. The news of such a project was presented not only to Brazilian authorities but to the general public through the newspapers, causing general commotion and great debate.

In general, Brazilian opinion was for rejecting this project on the ground that the United States' wanting to expel troublesome people involved in racial disputes to Brazil was a lack of respect and consideration. Many also said that Brazil had solved its racial differences in a satisfactory way and the coming of those individuals would initiate power disputes and instigate the kinds of racial conflict that existed in the United States.

Many affirmed that the Black Brazilians were already "tamed" and mixed with Indigenous and Europeans, in a way that would make them conform to the general expectations and to add those non-mixed Blacks that would bring their own views about the racial and social dynamics would only create more problems. Laws to forbid the entrance of Black immigrants in Brazil were presented by two representatives in the Congress, and although they were rejected according to Brazilian sense of self as a non-racist country, it was suggested that diplomatic authorities would take measures to make access to visas difficult for those of African blood.[20]

The presence of those black immigrants was seen as something against the expectations, a disturbance in the immigration policy that for decades had praised the European workers, and as a challenge to a legislation that had banned people from Africa from engaging as immigrant workers. The explanation is very simple: the "*Barbadianos*" arrived as British workers, being sheltered in their status of workers contracted by British companies that went to Brazil to execute projects in a limited time, therefore not as permanent immigrants.

As pointed out by researchers like Roseane Pinto Lima[21] and Cledenice Blackman[22] "*barbadiano*" is a generic name given to all black immigrant from the West Indies, among whom could be found people from Grenada, St Vincent, Jamaica, Trinidad, Saint Lucia and, of course, Barbados. The reason for this generalization is probably the fact that most of the Caribbean immigrants were Barbadians and most would board the ships at the port of Bridgetown in Barbados to sail to British Guiana and then to Brazil.

> *"Eu conto mais é da ilha de Granada onde papai nasceu… o que ocorre é que aqui em Porto Velho... eles acham que toda pessoa de cor é barbadiano... todo mundo que fala inglês aqui, dizem que é barbadiano".*

> [*I can tell you more about the island of Grenada where daddy was born… what happens is that here in Porto Velho… they think that all people of color are* barbadiano*… everybody who speaks English here, they say that he is* barbadiano*…*][23]

Migration has been a feature of life in Barbados life, as much as for all the islands that make up the British Caribbean, since the post settlement period, with Barbadians helping to settle new English possessions. In addition, before and after emancipation Afro-Barbadians who sought a better life went to British Guiana, Trinidad, Africa, the Leeward and Windward Islands and South and Central America.[24] In the 20th century Barbadians continued to move to Panama, Brazil, Cuba, the United States of America, Canada and the United Kingdom.

When compared to other groups of immigrants that arrived in Brazil during the same period, the Caribbean immigrants were a much smaller number, divided over a period of 50 to 60 years, starting in 1870. They were not sponsored by the local government and were not expected to set down roots in Brazil, since many of them arrived under a contract for a limited time. In Barbados, migration records from 1907 suggest that in some cases Barbadian and West Indian workers were recruited by a Hidelgo Co Ltd, who may have been acting on behalf of British or Brazilian companies.[25] In the words of Brazilian historian Vicente Salles:

> In fact, there was no conventional immigration. The migratory movement of Barbadians was directed by British capitalists who were granted successive contracts to carry out urbanization projects in Para and Amazonas. For that they needed skilled labourers, probably some who could speak the language and shared the same culture. The Barbadian Blacks, tamed by the English, were brought by ships of the Booth Steamship Co. Limited, which came from New York to Manaus, stopping in Barbados and Belém. Many of those workers were also taken to work in the construction of the Madeira-Mamoré railroad.[26]

The pressures to leave the islands were predicated on social and economic conditions that were constant for the first hundred years after the emancipation of the enslaved in the British West Indies. In the British colonies, abolition came much earlier than in Brazil: 1834. However, Black West Indians continued to suffer poverty and social exclusion after emancipation, and the living and working conditions were, in many ways, reminiscent of what they endured during slavery. Political, social and economic measures to control the masses were therefore a major feature of post

emancipation West Indian society and emigration was one of the major responses of the masses in their attempts to escape the restrictions of colonial oligarchy.

In addition, legislative provisions in the form of restrictive labour laws (contract law or located labourers Acts), vagrancy and police laws and immigration Acts were put in place to maintain the status quo and to guarantee cheap labour. At the same time, police forces were established and police stations, jails and mental asylums built in the colonial West Indies. The vagrancy Acts were aimed directly at independent economic activity by Blacks, especially huskers. The Masters and Servants Act, 1838, commonly called the Contract Labour Law confined Black labourers to working on the plantations where they had been previously enslaved. Altogether, with such laws subjecting people from the British Caribbean to low salaries and bad working conditions and restricting the possibilities for a better life emigration was seen as a way to overcome poverty. But the emigration could also be a response to natural disasters as pointed by Erna Brodber, there was an increase in the emigration from Jamaica after the earthquake of 1907 and the hurricanes of 1915 and 1917.[27]

With a territory of 430 square kilometres, Barbados did not offer many possibilities for expanding the agricultural economy. Plantations were dominant until the middle of the twentieth century, and land was expensive and therefore out of reach of most Blacks. The plantation tenantry and the chattel house were a direct consequence of the power of the planter class even after the emancipation. Franchise laws excluded all but the most well off blacks and coloureds.

> "The plantation sector in Barbados was clearly victorious in confining peasant activity and formation to levels tolerable to sugar production and the white community's conception of the role of blacks within the economy". [28]

The living standards of the majority of the population were characterized by living in a small easily movable house (chattel house)[29] on rocky, rented plantation land and labouring for meagre wages on the plantation. Those tenants who were lucky rented an extra piece of land to plant food for the household or for marketing. Additionally, some male tenants had artisanal skills or were fishermen, and were able to earn an extra income, while women would seek employment as maids or

washerwomen in the upper class houses or tried to make some money as hucksters[30]. Emigration would therefore become the natural outlet for the frustrated Black citizens of Barbados and the West Indies. W. Marshall, on the question of emigration, stated, "*Consequently it was difficult for a peasantry to emerge in these islands; those ex-slaves who wanted to better themselves away from the estates had to think of emigration*". [31]

Right after Emancipation thousands of Black Barbadians went to British Guiana where wages were better and land was available for farming. According to figures provided by Walter Rodney, about 30,000 Barbadians[32] migrated to British Guiana between 1835 and 1875. Overall it is estimated that by the early decades of the 20th century some 40,656 Barbadians had migrated to British Guiana either as independent migrants or through organized recruitment by agents of the planters and colonial authorities. Some of these Barbadians moved down to Brazil.

Barbadian authorities in the early post emancipation period in their narrow mindedness (unemployment and underemployment was rife) felt it necessary to keep Black Barbadians at home to protect the labour supply and little was done to ameliorate the conditions confronting the black masses. Samuel Jackman Prescod was an early advocate of emigration and acted as an emigration agent for persons seeking to migrate from Barbados to British Guiana. In 1837 he published a comment in the Liberal newspaper on a law that imposed limitations for emigration:

> *"The first is an Act which prohibits labourers from quitting the island, unless they have neither father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, wife or child, or having them, having sufficient to have to support them during the balance of their lives. As we are not of the opinion that this will be the case with the majority, it is to be concluded that this Act will have its effect, until the policy or justice of keeping a pauper to support his family becomes questionable".* [33]

However, by 1899 the same authorities were themselves looking for countries to send Barbadian workers to and spoke of the virtues of the Barbadian worker. The Governor's report stated:

> The poorer Barbadian emigrates to a considerable extent, but not as a rule, to make a home elsewhere. He is of a different nature to other islanders in the West Indies. His hard struggle for his daily bread, his everyday life among more or less of a crowd, where the weakest goes to the wall, have unsuited him for purely agricultural life which

> would be his if he migrated to an allotment in another island where land is a drug and population is needed. He is, as a rule, fairly educated.(…) "It is impossible to overlook the fact that the population becoming very large, while the resources from which it is fed are steadily diminishing, and therefore, in my opinion, the encouragement of emigration to suitable localities is deserving of strong support by the Legislature.[34]

The economic power of this island was in the hands of the minority white and a tiny coloured planter and merchant class who, through interlocking business and family interests, maintained a stranglehold on economic activity and upward mobility. This period, between the last quarter of the 19th and the first two decades of the 20th century, was a time of great economic uncertainty, caused by fluctuations in the price of sugar, the restrictions of the World War and the exclusionary character of the Barbadian society.

Caribbean people also made up the most important group of foreign workers in Panama from the beginning of the project in 1881. Barbados sent thousands of people to work on the Panama Canal between 1881 and 1888 – under French management – and again between 1904 and 1914, after the United States took over the project of building the Canal. Richardson estimates that 45,000 Barbadians out of a population of 200,000 migrated to Panama.[35] It is widely believed that many of those persons re-migrated, going to Brazil – and to other countries – following the call for construction workers. By that point the ties of the Caribbean network built in foreign lands had created a different identity among those workers, as many had married partners coming from a different island, and national identity gave place to a new one, and they became known in Panama as the Caribbean people.

OFF TO BRAZIL

The earliest registers of West Indians in Brazilian territory relate to their presence in the Amazon region, where they arrived among many other adventurers searching for fortune during the rubber boom. The production of rubber in Brazil started around the 1850s but its great development for international trading followed the spread of the second industrial revolution in Western Europe, between 1870 and 1910, after which it slowed down but still remained very important in the region during the 20th century.

Former president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, on a visit to the region in 1913 praised rubber production and its potential to change the Amazon, comparing it to the Gold Rush in the United States:

> "Rubber dazzled them, as gold and diamonds have dazzled other men and driven them forth to wander through the wide waste spaces of the world. Searching for rubber they made highways of rivers the very existence of which was unknown to the governmental authorities, or any map maker. Whether they succeeded or failed, they everywhere left behind them settlers, who toiled, married, and brought up children. Settlement began; the conquest of the wilderness entered on its first stage". [36]

As the rubber proved its economic importance, the dispute over the northern region that produced it increased. At the end of the 19th century, Brazil and Bolivia were involved in a dispute over the territory between the two countries, nowadays know as Acre. The case was settled through diplomacy (although with local conflicts between Brazilians and Bolivians), and brought about Brazilian engagement in constructing a railroad in the region that would link the region to the Atlantic port of Belém, benefiting the Bolivians who needed an export outlet for their products and facilitating the exploitation of rubber in Brazilian territory. The Madeira-Mamore railroad project was undertaken by Percival Farquhar, a citizen of the United States who already had extensive investments in Brazil. The construction began in 1907 and employed the services of New York engineers and the services of Brazilian workers and many others from various nationalities, among them the Barbadians.

Hoyos argues that during the construction (1907-1912) the project took about 5,000 Black West Indian workers, most of them from Barbados[37], a number that is not easy to confirm from existing sources, given the precariousness of the official documents registering those migrants in Brazil and in Barbados. Like other researchers, Hoyos points out that the Barbadians "... *joined there more than 20,000 immigrants, who came from almost every part of the world, and they distinguished themselves by their superior education and their training in practical skills*".[38]

Research shows that many other groups of foreign workers were allocated to northern Brazil to provide a labour force for the railroad project. Among them, Lamounier[39] and Ferreira[40] list Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Greek

workers. However, unlike others who left after the end of the construction, most of the Caribbean workers stayed on at the site, working for the railway or around it.

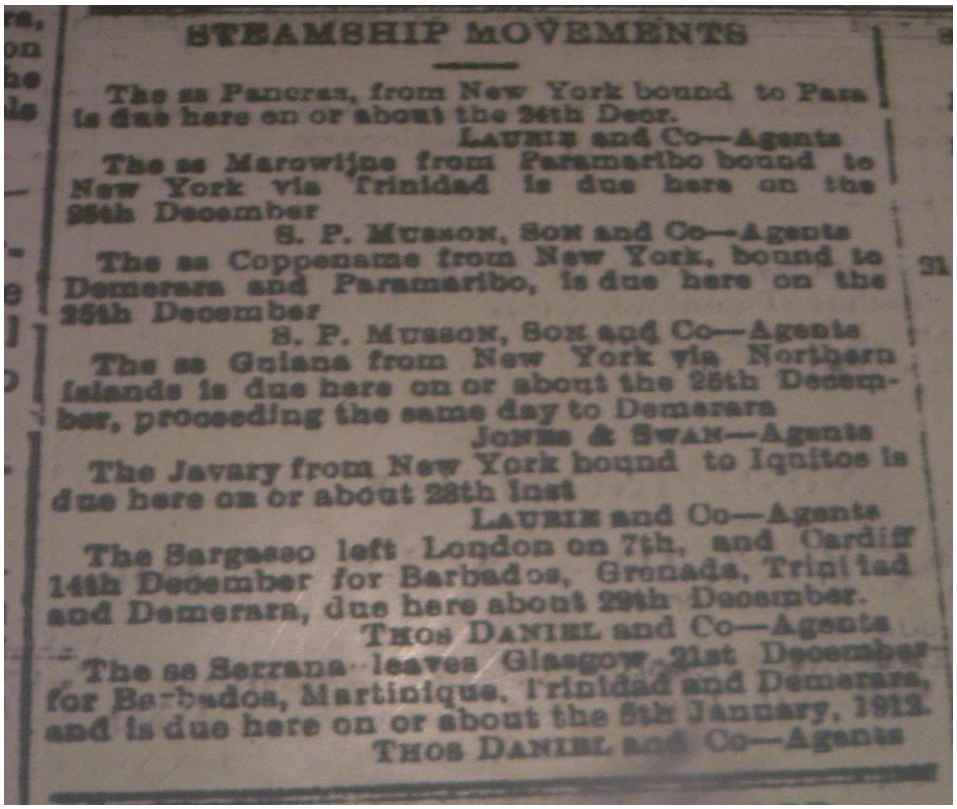
The Caribbean workers were also found in Manaus, capital city of Amazonas state, and Belém, capital of the state of Pará. In these other places they were also called *Barbadianos* and worked for British or United States companies in charge of building the tracks for street cars, upgrading the port, building power stations, and riverine navigation among others. According to personal testimonies presented by Lima[41], Blackman[42], Fonseca and Teixeira,[43] and Sampaio[44], Caribbean immigrants were involved in several activities, sometimes related to the railroad, such as the laundry women who worked for the officials of the Madeira-Mamoré, nurses or maids, also employed as part of the company, and sometimes independently, as teachers, nurses, maids, those who opened small business such as bars or food vending, and seamstress, tailors, sailors, drivers, etc.

Some of the Caribbean families found in Brazil are: Alleyne, Banfield, Edwards, Davis, Maloney, Holder, Blackman, Grant, Saint Clair, Goodrich, Mings, Bissete, Layne, Du Bois, Jones, Shilling, Johnson, Depeiza, Shockness, Scantleberry, Motley, Skeete, Lynthcot, Burnett, White, Busby, Chase, Deane, Lynch, Huggins and Marshal; although the spelling of the some names are not exactly accordingly to traditional English, we decide to keep them as presented by the families.[45] Despite the fact that the majority of these immigrants were located in the northern part of Brazil, some, like Vincentian Richard Davis Huggins, a mechanic, were employed by the São Paulo Railway. In the city of São Paulo, in the southeast of Brazil, he got married to Louise Kirby in 1916 and had two daughters. According to the examined documentation, the family lived there for about 20 years.[46] Another important branch of the descendants of Barbadianos was located in Vitória, capital of the state of Espírito Santo (also in the southeast). This Blackman family apparently has arrived in Brazil through Belém, where they stayed for a short period, moving to Mato Grosso and later to Vitória in the early 1920s, where Hermínio Blackman was born. There Hermínio became a very respectable citizen and has a school, an avenue and a Masonic Lodge named after him[47].

Most of Caribbean immigrants arrived in Brazilian territory brought by a company or a contractor, but some arrived independently, following another relative,

a friend, or a dream. As immigrant workers they were ready to face any challenge in order to make money and perhaps go back to their island for a better life, or send for other family members.

Many shipping lines at the time used Bridgetown as a hub and coaling station in the link between Europe, the Caribbean and North and South America, as shown in the following ad: [48]



STEAMSHIP MOVEMENTS

The ss Pancras, from New York bound to Para is due here on or about the 24th Decr.
LAURIE and Co—Agents

The ss Marowijne from Paramaribo bound to New York via Trinidad is due here on the 26th December
S. P. MUSSON, SON and Co—Agents

The ss Coppename from New York, bound to Demerara and Paramaribo, is due here on the 25th December
S. P. MUSSON, SON and Co—Agents

The ss Guiana from New York via Northern Islands is due here on or about the 25th December, proceeding the same day to Demerara
JONES & SWAN—Agents

The Javary from New York bound to Iquitos is due here on or about 28th inst
LAURIE and Co—Agents

The Sargasso left London on 7th, and Cardiff 14th December for Barbados, Grenada, Trinidad and Demerara, due here about 29th December.
THOS DANIEL and Co—Agents

The ss Serrana leaves Glasgow 21st December for Barbados, Martinique, Trinidad and Demerara, and is due here on or about the 8th January, 1912.
THOS DANIEL and Co—Agents

An article from the *Barbados Directory* of 1887 promotes Barbados as being

> ... the concentric point of steam, postal and telegraphic facilities its importance as a commercial port is superior to any in the Caribbean Sea, and it is annually visited by a large number of vessels of all nationalities in search of employment; and as it is the most Windward of the group of West Indian islands, possesses unrivalled advantages as a chartering centre.[49]

Unlike the recruitment of Barbadian labour for Panama, the recruitment of labour for Brazil seemed to have been an unorganized affair. The Agricultural Reporter of June 3rd 1910 under the headline *Emigration To Brazil And Its Perils - 1904-1905* stated that:

> They have been taken from this country without protection being afforded them by the Government, or Emigration Agent, or any other person under the sun. They have gone to a place where they are subjected to atrocities like those horrible ones exposed by Mr Labouchera in "Truth". The region where the railway is being constructed is a veritable hell of fever. There death dogs men's footsteps and lay low many a score day by day. We have heard tell of six hundred stalwart Germans who went out to work there and five hundred died off in a few weeks. [50]

According to the same *Agricultural Reporter*, a labour recruiter named Mr. Spillers, known to the United States authorities for illegal recruiting of labourers in the Caribbean for work sites throughout South and Central America, came to Barbados in May of 1910 with his steamer the "Oteri" and took 160 Barbadians without legal authority to Brazil to work for the contractors of the railway, a fact also reported in the *Jamaica Gleaner*.[51]

Many Barbadians in their zeal to seek a better life were being recruited by unofficial agents for work in South America and were finding difficulties with the wages and conditions of work. Those employed in the rubber producing areas seem to have been forced into a system that kept workers in perpetual debt to the companies, and offered poor living conditions. Casement explains this debt/wage system:

> Throughout the greater part of the Amazon region, where the rubber trade flourishes, a system of dealing prevails which is not tolerated in civilised communities. In so far as it affects a labouring man or an individual who sells his labour, it is termed "peonage", and is represented by drastic measures in some parts of the New World. It consists in getting the person working for you into your debt and keeping him there; and in lieu of other means of discharging this obligation he is forced to work for his creditor upon what are practically the latter's terms.[52]

The Barbadians working on the railway in Brazil seemed to have been in a more fortunate position in terms of kind of work and living conditions than those working in other areas of the Amazon. Still, they had to face diseases like malaria, small pox, yellow fever, tuberculosis and others, in addition to malnutrition, snakes, wild beasts and attacks by indigenous people.

> Railway building implied mobility - the need to move with the work. It also meant isolation - living far from cities, apart from family and friends, often in distant, frontier regions. Working together, living

> together in encampments by the line, sharing anxieties, danger and sickness - all helped to create special ties. At the same time, working conditions were precarious. The nature and severity of the work (particularly excavating, tunneling, blasting and bridge-building) as well as ethnic differences and poverty generated friction within groups of workers and between gangs. The repeated concern of contractors and engineers about security in the encampments, as well as the presence of the police there, testifies to the frequency of disturbances.[53]

Despite the fact that there are no accurate registers on the Caribbean emigration to Brazil, as it was badly regulated and mostly carried out independently of official authorities, a few documents have been found accounting for the departure of passengers from Barbados to Brazil. In December of 1907 fourteen Barbadians, one woman and thirteen men, were recruited by Hidelgo and Company to work in Brazil. Eight of them were teenagers between ages sixteen and nineteen; only the two oldest men (30 and 32 years old) were married; the other twelve listed father or mother as next of kin left on the island[54]. The finding confirms the concerns of some Barbadian authorities that the island was losing young people during this period of mass migration, and the testimonies of most descendants of emigrants in Brazil, who pointed out that their parents got married in Brazilian territory.

The District A Emigrants register from April 1911 confirms the fact that people from other nationalities departed from Barbados to Brazil. The list identified the emigrants by nationality, being: 20 from St Vincent, 13 from Trinidad and Tobago, 11 from British Guiana, 5 from St Lucia, 4 from Grenada, 2 from Dominica, 1 from Nevis and 1 from Saba. Again, the youthfulness of the travellers was striking, with one teenager, fifty-four between twenty and thirty years old, and two in their thirties.[55]

Despite the difficulties faced in Brazil, or because of those difficulties, including the distance between the host land and their home land, most of those who emigrated from the Caribbean did not go back and eventually lost contact with relatives that stayed behind. The mail activity reviewed so far for the periods 1903-1905, 1907-1909 and 1914-1916 suggests that some 165,327 pieces of mail, including letters and parcels were received and some 64,131 pieces were sent to Brazil.[56] This mail activity indicates a relatively strong Barbadian presence during this period.

Differently from what happened to those who departed for Panama and British

Guiana the Barbadians who moved to Brazil did not seem to send back remittances. The mail registers do not record any postal orders to or from Brazil, a fact perhaps caused by the scarcity of US dollars or British pounds, an effect of an economic crisis in the country, or perhaps that what was sent was so small it was recorded in the "Other Places" section of the mail.[57]

The issue of remittances from emigrants in Brazil to families in Barbados may also have resulted from issues of currency convertibility that plagued Brazil during the years 1890-1914 when migration by Barbadians to Brazil was at its peak.[58] Additionally, though Barbadian migrants sought a better life in Brazil and had opportunities for employment the economic situation in Brazil was not always conducive for remitting money to dependents in Barbados. Oliveira and Silva make the point that

> ... in 1913 falling rubber and coffee prices and the shrinkage of international capital flows (following the Balkan Wars), the boom turned into a slump: the sudden reversal of the external position, led to a loss in reserves that was translated into a contraction of the monetary base affecting the economic performance of the economy.[59]

The crisis in rubber trading affected the entire economy of the northern states of Amazonas and Pará and the territory of Rondonia, which based their economies on this product. Therefore, many Barbadians would have faced hard times in Brazil.

Not an ordinary Black

The Barbadian/Caribbean immigrants who arrived in Brazil at the turn of the century, had to face the racial dynamics of their new home and adapt to the challenges they represented for a newcomer. First of all it is important to note that there were other Black people living in those place. Salles presented an important account of Blacks in Pará, with emphasis on their lives during slavery[60]; Teixeira[61] has noted the presence of descendants of slaves who lived in the territory of Guaporé, which in the late nineteen-century was renamed as Rondônia; Flavio Gomes refers to slavery and runaway communities in northern Brazil[62], and Barbara Weinstein refers to a slave owning elite in Amazonas and Pará during the 19th century, right before the rubber boom[63].

Francisco Bento da Silva analysed the fate of poor Blacks and mulattoes who

were sentenced to live in the Amazon region as a way to "clean" the important cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo of undesirable people, at the turn of the 20th century.[64] There were also internal currents of migration that led blacks from the coastal states of Maranhão and Paraíba, for example, to explore their chances of finding work in those places. In other words, the rubber boom and the projects for modernization/urbanization also attracted other workers who felt they were at a disadvantage in their original places and thus decided to seek adventure in other lands. Black people from the Caribbean would find in northern Brazil other Blacks who were the descendants of slaves or who were mixed with indigenous peoples or whites. More than that, Black foreigners would face Brazilian racism and its distinctive nuances.

After almost 400 years of slavery, Brazilian society was struggling to adjust to the presence of Blacks and mulattoes as individuals with political and social rights like any other citizens. The ideology of whitening was adopted on top of centuries of miscegenation, in which a kind of chromatocracy was developed where lighter skin prevailed over darker skin, and the African descendants were still associated with the barbarism of slavery. Without creating segregationist laws or colour bars, as in the United States and South Africa, Brazilian society managed to keep the afro-descendant population at the bottom of the social pyramid, in a way that emphasized white supremacy and Black domination, with Blacks performing the lowest tasks, exposed to poverty and deprivation, pushed by anti-vagrancy laws to work for the lowest pay and at constant risk of being jailed for any crimes attributed to them.

The Black subjects of the British Empire arrived at a very difficult time for Black people in Brazil, when they faced inherited racism from relations of slavery and competition from European immigrants, a situation that affected the entire country, including the northern states of the Amazonia.

An example of the racist theories that were very popular in the transition from the 19th to 20th century is found in the writings of José Verissimo, an intellectual from Para state who defended miscegenation as the way to whiten Amazonia. Verissimo in his first speeches on racism assigned Blacks to the bottom of the racial pyramid below indigenous peoples. Later, in 1889, he reviewed his position, affirming that Blacks were above indigenous people, but still believing that miscegenation would turn the northern population white[65]. For him, as for most intellectuals of that time, civilization was defined by Europeans, it could exist only among white people and the

only possible path for the modernization and civilization of the Amazon was to accelerate the whitening of its population, and to that end more European workers should be imported.

According to Marilia Ferreira Emmi, between 1908 and 1910 about 13,500 foreigners entered the Port of Belem - 48.67% were Portuguese, 15.98% Spanish, 7.18% British, 4.69% Turkish/Arabic, and 4.15% Italians[66]. The British immigrants were the third largest group of foreigners in the region and comprised not only those born in England but British citizens from the colonies, particularly those from the Caribbean. Census data from 1920, 1940 and 1950 show the British group as the fourth largest group of immigrants in Amazonas and Pará states, where Portuguese were still the biggest group, followed by Spanish and Italians[67]. Although the data reinforce the important presence of British immigrants, they also support the preference for European immigrants in the Amazon, as in the rest of Brazil. In fact the port of Para received the fifth highest number of Portuguese immigrants in Brazil between 1920 and 1950. Edilza Oliveira Fontes' study on the debate over the import of foreign workers for the state of Pará shows that the elites had a preference for Portuguese workers, considered more adaptable, hard workers and culturally closer to Brazilians[68].

The same phenomenon was identified in Manaus-Amazonas, by Maria Luiza Ugarte Pinheiro, who found that Portuguese and British were the two major groups of foreign workers employed in the reconstruction projects of the Port of Manaus, undertaken by the Manaus Habour Limited, between 1880 and 1920[69].

Brazilian legislation at the beginning of the century demanded that foreign contractors employ the same numbers of national and foreign workers for all projects undertaken[70], although one cannot say exactly how the legislation was observed, given that the children of European immigrants born in Brazil were considered national workers and still got better chances of employment than the others. Still, the sources compiled on Caribbean immigrants in Rondonia and in Belém show that Caribbean workers also saw themselves as different from, even superior to, Brazilian workers, especially Black Brazilian workers.

Unlike in the British colonies in the Caribbean, the process of emancipation in Brazil was not accompanied by efforts to educate the freed men and women and at the turn of the century, about 15 years after abolition, Black workers in Brazil were therefore mostly illiterate.

The education and skills of the Barbadians and other Caribbean people were indeed an important factor in their recruitment for this enterprise, according to Leslie Greenfield[71] in his research on the Barbadian emigrants in Brazil. Barbadians have a long tradition of education going back, even though it was not the official position of the colonial governments, to the missionary and other church oriented schools that gave some basic education even to the enslaved. This role played by the religious organizations in the socialization process cannot be ignored and should not be underestimated.

The recognition of the importance of education among Caribbean workers and the role it played in their advancement was also emphasized by Carmen Hutchinson-Miller[72] and Ronald Harpelle[73] for the case of Caribbean immigrants in Costa Rica, and by Marc McLeod[74] among the same immigrants in Cuba, also at the turn of the 20th century.

On the eve of emancipation the British government decided that there was to be an official policy of religious and educational instruction of the slaves so as to prepare the slaves for freedom. This policy was to be implemented through the Anglican Church in the West Indies under the leadership of Bishop Coleridge. Bishop Coleridge built eleven chapel-schools for the ex-slaves during the years 1836-1842.[75]One of the most important initiatives in the development of the education of the masses in Barbados was the establishment of the Codrington Trust by Christopher Codrington. Through this Trust the Codrington College was established to train clergy to minister and teach to the slaves in the Caribbean.[76]

By the late 19th century the Barbadian working classes had acquired some basic education and skills. In addition, the nonconformist churches such as the Methodist, Moravians and Baptists had already been giving some limited religious and educational instruction to the slaves against the hostile and violent objection of the planter class who, like their conservative cousins in England, objected to such liberal ideas. The Moravians established themselves in Barbados in 1765.[77] As Hoyos points out, "In the West Indies, as in England, religion was to play a powerful part in the reforming movement. The Methodists, the Moravians and the Baptists won the deep gratitude of the slaves by their missionary activities".[78]

The connection between the protestant churches and education was also linked

to civilization and, together with the tight British colonial system, resulted in suffocating many of the African aspects of the Black culture in the Caribbean. At the turn of the century, the *Barbadianos* living in Brazilian territory were proud of their language, their religion and above all about the distance between them and the local Blacks, practitioners of *candomblé*, *macumbas*, *batuques*, *sambas* and other traditions rooted in African cultures.

In Rondonia, at the beginning of the construction of the Madeira-Mamoré railroad, the *Barbadianos* helped to build the company compound and were soon given jobs as carpenters, mechanics and masons. As time progressed the area where the Barbadians built their homes became known as the Barbadian Town, later Alto do Bode or Goat Hill. The homes the Barbadians built reflected the chattel house styles that they were accustomed to in Barbados. After the nationalization of the railway in 1912 the Barbadians continued to work for the railway, as civil servants of the Brazilian government but to continue working in that situation they had to request naturalization. [79]

The preservation of the Caribbean culture was compromised both by the environment and the experiences endured such as changes like the adoption of United States rooted Baptist religion or other evangelical denominations, given the absence of English priests and the seasonal availability of United States missionaries in the Amazon[80]. The 1st Baptist Church (Primeira Igreja Batista) of Porto Velho was inaugurated in 1919 with massive participation of *Barbadianos*[81]. On the other hand, loyalty to the Queen of England, the home-based scholling in English for the children of the Barbadianos[82] added to other efforts to preserve all possible aspects of Caribbean traditions made these people different from the locals and made the neighbourhood of Alto do Bode a unique space.

As a way of preserving their culture, endogamy was widely practiced among the immigrants and the first generation born in Brazil. This was easy enough to do, given that socialization, especially for women, was restricted to the Caribbean community. They could marry between different nationalities, like Barbadian and Grenadian for example, but these were considered the same group in that circumstance. This phenomenon was also present in Belém and Manaus.

As the majority of the Caribbean immigrants went for the security of a job with the railroad company, others found occupations independently from the railroad. Some opened small hotels or bars, women were washers or started businesses selling

food, men and women could also be employed as teachers within their community and later on to teach English to the children of the elite[83]. Some scholars argue that the first schools of Porto Velho started in the Barbadian Town, during the first decade of the 20th century.[84]

After the failure of the railroad job opportunities got scarce and the area now known as Goat Hill became another impoverished neighbourhood. The *Barbadianos* faced discrimination and exclusion. The testimonies refer to discrimination and stigmatization of the place as a location for criminals[85]. But they also mention survival tactics, like the use of English as a coded language to protect them from harassment:

> When the police came to the hill, the *BARBADIANOS* would start to speak in English so the policemen would not know who to arrest, then they had to get down from the hill and tell their bosses that over there were only a lot of "bodes" (goats) who just started to "bodejar"...[86]

However, for many immigrant families the investments in education for the first generation born in Brazil started to pay off, as the second generation of Barbadianos (women and men) achieved relative importance as teachers in the public system, a tradition that was maintained by those families up to the end of the century. Nowadays there are university professors, medical doctors, certified nurses, lawyers and journalists, with a predominance of English and Mathematic teachers.[87] The higher achievements of the women in the educational and health systems in Rondônia during the 20th century is remarked in the studies on Blacks in the Amazon region.[88]

Supported by the testimonies of descendants of Barbadians, Mara Genecy Nogueira[89] shows that from the second decade of the 20th century there was a clear division of classes and status in the growing town of Porto Velho. Besides the division between the elite (generally related to the railroad administrators) and the working class, the *Barbadianos* were represented as a different group of working class, and especially as a different type of blacks. They were foreigners, they spoke English, they were literate, and they had a completely distinct culture. That, according to the author, gave the Barbadian Town or Alto do Bode a unique character, in contrast to the *Mocambo*, another neighbourhood were the local Black and mulatto population lived in Porto Velho.

During the 1940s Aluísio Ferreira, Governor of the territory of Rondônia,

decided to "rid" the capital city of Porto Velho, setting the Police force on the population of Alto do Bode. Nilza Menezes[90] has collected some memoirs from the period:

> (Dionísio Shockness, *Barbadiano*) "Aluísio era preconceituoso com cor e o pior de tudo é que ele criou um grupo que não se podia nem dizer que ele era feio, dava cadeia! [Aluisio was colour prejudiced, and worst of all is that he created a group of people that, even if you just said that he was ugly, they would throw you in jail.]
>
> (Aurélia Banfield, first generation born in Brazil) "Aluísio Ferreira não gostava dos negros, porque eles não obedeciam, porque eram súditos da rainha, não eram analfabetos e falavam inglês." [Aluisio Ferreira did not like Blacks, because they were not submissive, they were the queen's subjects, they were not illiterate and they spoke English.]

The pride of belonging to a superior culture was not accompanied by the financial means to enable those families to return to their countries after finishing their contract with the railroad company. Even when their initial contract included paid transportation from Brazil back to Barbados, many workers at that point had families and the financial burden of paying for their spouses and children made return impossible.

> "Quando a estrada de ferro parou, muitos que não tiveram filhos e quiseram voltar para a terra de origem, a companhia inglesa pagava a passagem de volta. No caso do meu pai, que teve 12 filhos, teria que pagar uma fiança até certas idade para cada filho, para se naturalizar inglês, o que dificultou a volta..." [When work on the railroad came to an end, many of those who did not have children and wanted to go back home had their passage paid by the British Company. In the case of my father, who had 12 children, he would have had to pay a fee for each child of a certain age to get them the British passport, and that made it difficult to return..."] (Theophilus Shockness interviewed by Menezes)[91]

The situation was different in Belém, the most important port of the Amazon region and the capital of the state of Pará and at the centre of the movement for modernization that also included the state of Amazonas. There, companies contracted to work on urbanizing projects like the Para Electric Railway and Lighting Co., the Amazon Telegraph Co, and the Para Harbour Co, among others, employed skilled Caribbean workers in several areas. In Belém, they were also known as *Barbadianos*.[92]

As in Porto Velho, the majority of the *Barbadianos* employed by those companies in the first decades of the 20th century were men. Women however came from the Caribbean islands or from Porto Velho or Manaus (as the *Barbadianos* sometimes would move from one project or one town to another) and dedicated themselves to raising families and generating income as seamstresses, washers, teachers, or from home-based occupations such as the sale of homemade cakes and other foods, or the manufacturing of hats and flowers. There also *Barbadianos* who used their own kitchens, verandas or backyards as classrooms, teaching in English to preserve their culture.

More fortunate than those in Porto Velho or Manaus, the *Barbadianos* in Belém got their own Anglican Church. The Para Anglican Church was inaugurated in 1912 as part of the benefits the Brazilian government conceded to British companies, with financial support from the big companies from England and the great participation of the Barbadian community. The church soon provided space for a school, also maintained by the community, and the social life of all British citizens (whites or blacks) was centralized around religious activities. In the beginning the white British took the leadership in activities but from 1930s, as the companies left Belém, the *Barbadianos* and their children took over the administration and leadership under the watch of an English priest who stayed until the 1940s.[93]

For those born in Brazilian territory, learning Portuguese was not an option but a necessity for economic and social survival. In Porto Velho and in Belém, *Barbadianos* sent their children to local teachers to learn Portuguese, but retained British education and the practice of their culture, including the use of English at home, as part of their family tradition. At a time when public schools were not often available and school supplies were costly, many families made economic sacrifices to give their children a better opportunity.

These opportunities came in the form of employment with those companies or institutions that needed bilingual workers, like the United States military base established in Belém during World War II, which employed Barbadian young women to help with communications and as secretaries. Other young women, along with the some of the men, found jobs as teachers teaching not only English but Mathematics, Science or piano. Soon, the *Barbadianos* were known as the best English teachers in the region. There were also some men who continued to work for the navigation, port,

electricity or street car companies, following the former employment of their fathers.[94]

In Pará also, the need to keep their distance from the common Blacks, the Brazilians, kept the *Barbadianos* from adopting Afro-Brazilian culture and stimulated endogamy, although in a bigger city Caribbean men had greater possibilities of marrying Brazilians, than did Caribbean women who, according to Lima, spoke of the difficulties Black women faced in making a suitable marriage.

The modernized centre was also appealing and soon the children of immigrants were divided in their loyalty to their parents' homelands and the appeals of assuming Brazilian identity. Many described this dilemma between life inside the home and the community social network, where they had to maintain the British/Caribbean attitude, and life outside in the streets where they could be just another Brazilian. This was not always possible. According to Lima, the *Barbadianos* could be identified by their clothes, the hats worn by men and women, their conservative style and their dark skins.

In Belém as much as in Porto Velho these immigrants cultivated their ties with their homeland and, with great intensity, with the British Empire. Lima[95], Neves and Shockness[96] and Menezes[97] describe in their researches that in both communities members would keep in touch with their culture by practicing elements of their culture such as five o'clock tea, the portrait of the queen hanging on the wall, memorabilia from the royal wedding of Elizabeth the Second, the Bible and the religious hymns in English, magazines and newspapers from London and, according to Neves and Shockness even after years without contact with their homeland, some would try to listen to the TV news hoping for some news from England:

> Catherine Thomas Shockness: Nasci no dia dois de novembro de 1894 na Ilha de Granada (...) Cheguei em Porto Velho num grande navio em 1910, com meu marido, o marceneiro Charles Nathaniel Shockness. Meu marido foi contratado pelos ingleses para trabalhar na construção da Estrada de Ferro Madeira Mamoré. Tivemos dez filhos e filhas: Caetano, Silas, Arão, Paulo, Teófilus, Dionísio, Miriam, Alice, Lucinda e o Moisés.
>
> (...) Uma coisa que eu gostava era de ficar na sala, sentada numa cadeira de palha para assistir o Jornal Nacional: *Opa, eu vai assistir o Jornal Nacional*. Muitas vezes não era nem para saber notícias daqui - que eu não entendia muito bem, mas era para ouvir notícias de fora, da minha terra, a Inglaterra. Eu ficava superemocionada, chegava até a chorar na cadeira de embalo quando tocava um hino de fora.

> [I was born in November 2, 1894 in the island of Grenada (...) I arrived in Porto Velho in a big ship in 1910 with my husband, the mason Charles Nataniel Shockness. My husband was contracted by the English to work in the construction of the Railway Madeira-Mamoré. We had ten children: Caetano, Silas, Arão, Paulo, Teófilus, Dionísio, Miriam, Alice, Lucinda and Moisés].
>
> Something that I always loved to do was to sit in a straw chair in the living room to watch the *Jornal Nacional* (TV news): "Opa, me going to watch Jornal Nacional". Many times it was not to know the local news, which I didn't understand very well, but I was there to listen for foreign news, from my homeland, from England. I would become very emotional, coming to tears sitting there, when they played that foreign national anthem.][98]

The other face of the cultural identification of the *Barbadianos* in Belém was the stigma associated with those Black foreigners. They were never accepted among the largely light skinned and white middle class because of their skin colour, and neither the working class, mostly black, mulattoes or *pardos* want to accept them because they did not share the same culture, they were foreigners, protestants, the strange Blacks who did not dance the *samba* or go to the *batuques.* In addition, mixed Brazilians nurtured prejudices against the dark foreigners, adapting the racist theories of the intellectuals to their own environment and seeing the *Barbadianos* as abnormal people, and soon enough the term "*Barbadiano*" became an insult in the local culture of the lower class.[99]

Lima presented testimonies of Barbadian descendants who reported being divided over this situation: if their parents found out that they were greeting people from their community in Portuguese, such as saying "bom dia" instead of "good morning", they would be physically punished at home; however, if a national heard them speaking in English in the streets of Belém, they would scream an accusatory "*Barbadiano!*".[100]

Undesirable Immigrants

Sociologist Gilberto Freyre found incredible support among national and foreign intellectuals for his romantic description of slavery in Northeast plantations in *Casa Grande e Senzala*[101], a masterpiece first published in 1933 that has greatly influenced the ideology of racial democracy in Brazil, and is referenced as the intellectual proof of the absence of racial conflicts in Brazil. Thirty years later,

another sociologist analysed the status of Blacks in the Brazilian society, this time after slavery. It was Florestan Fernandes who acknowledged the inequality between Blacks and Whites in Brazil and attributed the exclusion of Afro-Brazilians to the fact that abolition did not give them any support with integrating into the society[102].

> For many years, Brazilian sociology has described black families as dysfunctional and unstable. Poverty, illiteracy and economic exclusion, according to Florestan Fernandes, were the main factors driving black families in Brazil to alcoholism, prostitution, crime and marginality.[103]

Contradicting Fernandes' thesis that Brazilian racism against black people was a due to the cultural backwardness that prevailed in the society and that it would be overcome with economic and cultural development, Carlos Hasenbalg defends the argument that there are economic advantages in keeping Afro-Brazilians at the bottom of the social pyramid[104]. Moreover, by feeding the ideology of black inferiority, political and economic power is kept in the hands of the white or non-black elite.[105]

During the first forty years of the Brazilian republic (1890-1930), when once again the government claimed to have a programme of modernization, its efforts towards progress coincided with the apex of the thesis of scientific racism. These ideas supported the positivist ideology and proved to be essential in justifying the inferiority of Blacks and indigenous peoples so that these two segments of the population would serve in the progress of a nation that used pseudo-scientific theories to deny them full citizenship.

It was at this time that many Barbadians arrived in Brazilian territory searching for a better life, with financial and social betterment. But how could they find that in a society that considered Black people incapable of progress and kept building barriers to deny their moving up the social scale?

Lima uses personal experiences to emphasize the racial prejudice during the 1940s against the Black immigrant, considered an outsider that surprisingly occupied positions that traditionally were beyond the reach of Afro-Brazilians. Sometimes, racist attitudes could come from Black Brazilians, as told by Beatriz White, a *Barbadiana* who worked as secretary for a military commander at the U.S. Base in Belém:

> Tinha muito preconceito. Tinha tanto preconceito que tinha um rapaz, ele era negro, (...) e eu tinha pedido [a ele] roupas para o comandante, [na lavanderia, onde eu fui proibida, pelo comandante, de freqüentar, pois era tido como lugar de "mulheres da vida"] (...) e escutei ele dizer: 'Eu vou levar isto aqui pra aquela negra, porque ela já me pediu...', e começou a me xingar. Ele me disse tanta da coisa (sic). E eu fiquei com tanta da raiva (sic). Eu fui reclamar! Quase que ele vai pra rua.
>
> [There was lots of prejudice. So much prejudice that there was a young man, he was Black, (...) and I had asked him (to take) the commandant's clothes to the laundry, where I was forbidden to go because the place had a bad reputation (...) I heard him saying: "I am taking this for that *negra,* because she already told me..." and he started to curse me. He said so many things about me! I was very angry. I complained about him! He was almost fired.][106]

The previously mentioned opposition to Black immigrants that had arisen in the 19th century and again in 1921 continued to challenge intellectuals, politicians and diplomats throughout the 1920s and into the first years of the next decade. After the failure of the plan to send African Americans to Brazil in 1921 and the political debate in the Congress that followed, resulting in "diplomatic restrictions to the immigration of inferior races",

> ...the Minister of Foreign Affairs, José Manoel de Azevedo Marques, sent confidential messages in 1921 to the Brazilian embassy in Washington and to the Brazilian consulates in Chicago, St. Louis, New York, New Orleans, Baltimore and San Francisco – also to the Brazilian consulate in Barbados – ordering Brazilian diplomats to refuse visas requested by Black immigrants[107].

After the polemic caused by the projects of 1921 and the diplomatic measures against the immigration of Black people, the Brazilian image of racial tolerance was publicly challenged. Still, without mentioning the question of racism, the government defended its sovereignty in determining its own immigrations policies.

In 1923 another version of the racist immigration project asserted the rejection of Black immigrants and extended the racial barrier to limit the immigration of Japanese[108]. The argument against Black immigrants was based on the danger represented by African American immigrants who, in the vision of the Congress, would not only delay the project of whitening through miscegenation but also would be a danger to public order because they were not as submissive and docile as the Brazilian Blacks who had accepted and adapted to white superiority or, as the popular

saying in Brazil went: *O bom preto é aquele que sabe o seu lugar*. (A good Black is one who knows his place).

The matter of Black immigration went beyond the congress, reaching the newspapers and inflaming popular debate. In Belém do Pará, on the occasion of the arrival of a few Barbadian immigrants the same debate took place, with journalists arguing against the newcomers, comparing them negatively with the local Blacks, who were already softened by miscegenation, who created the smiling and easygoing *pardos*. "...the *Barbadianos* were seen as "ugly people", as intruders, (...) people with scowling faces..."[109]. For them also the presence of Barbadians was putting the modernization project at risk.

In 1925 the Sociedade Nacional de Agricultura (National Agricultural Society) launched a national survey on the importation of Black immigrants with questionnaires administered in all Brazilian states and involving the Brazilian Geographic Society, the Medical Academy and other institutions. The results published in 1926 showed massive rejection of Black immigrants and limited acceptance of Japanese, considered superior to Blacks.[110]

At the end of the decade the debate was still going on in one of the most important of Brazilian newspapers, O Estado de São Paulo, which represented the voices of the elite of São Paulo state. A letter from the editor in 1929 stated:

> Although we don't have colour prejudice, we feel obliged to admit that Blacks do not constitute strong elements of civilization, (in the process of miscegenation) they do not contribute to the racial upgrading with physical, mental and moral strength... This mission of hosting a decayed, retarded, persecuted and unhappy race would be very risky. We would not want it for us who have been given the task by (Divine) Providence of populating a very rich territory and building a great nation, something that could only be possible with a large number of the highest quality people, who have already proven their ability to spread civilization.[111]

The debate was finally settled in 1934 when the new constitution introduced a law limiting the number of immigrants and defining undesirable types of immigrant. This was the period of the nationalistic government of Getulio Vargas, and a time when the world was highly influenced by the ideas of "pure" and "superior" races found in Nazism, Fascism and neo-colonialism. Endrica Geraldo remarks that between 1930 and 1945 the Vargas government increased restrictions on immigration

and propagated nationalist laws that imposed difficulties on those planning to move to Brazil and on those foreigners already resident in the country, with the exception of those of European origin, unless they were Jewish.[112] Part of the difficulty for foreign residents was the prohibition of the use of any foreign language; thus any schools, newspapers, church congregations and any other institutions that used a foreign language were to cease their activities or adopt the national language.

The Barbadian community in Belém was also affected by this law. James Burnett, born in Belem from Barbadian parents, remembers the fact in an interview with Maria Roseane Lima:

> Eu estudei numa escola que ficava na [avenida] Assis de Vasconcelos (...) que não sei se ainda existe, mas deve existir. E lá todas as disciplinas, português, matemática, tudo era ensinado em inglês. Eu era muito pequeno, mas sei que lá estudavam os filhos de barbadianos, era uma escola específica para filhos barbadianos. Eu saí de lá cedo porque todos fomos obrigados pelo Vargas a sair. Quando veio o Vargas, ele cortou esse tipo de escola. Aí eu tive que estudar em outro lugar, agora em português. Mas, na minha casa, os meus pais só falavam inglês. Nós todos nos comunicávamos em inglês, de forma que sempre exercitei meu inglês.
>
> [I attended a school that was in Assis de Vasconcelos Avenue (...) I don't know if it still exists, but it should exist. And there all the disciplines, Portuguese, mathematics, everything was taught in English. I was very young, but I know that was the place where the children of Barbadians studied; it was a school specially for the children of Barbadians. I left the school earlier because we all were forced to do so by Vargas. When Vargas came, he cut out this type of school. Then I had to go to school somewhere else, and now in Portuguese. But at home, my parents only spoke in English. We all communicate in English, and that way I always practiced my English.][113]

It was also around this time that the Anglican Church started to say mass in Portuguese, a fact that divided the community because the conservatives would not accept "translation" of their religious practices.[114] The law also imposed the use of Brazilian/Portuguese names instead of foreign ones in the birth certificates of those born after 1934. After that it was more difficult to maintain the original culture and to avoid being assimilated by the host culture.

Article 121, paragraph 6 of the 1934 Constitution determined an annual limit on the number of immigrants of each nationality, forbidding the concentration of immigrants from a single group in any place or area of the Brazilian territory. The

idea of the undesirable immigrant again generated debate; several amendments were presented in which the Black immigrant was banned due to hygienic, ethnic or even medical reasons. The idea was to not permit the immigration of individuals who would jeopardize the Brazilian project for the construction of the national race and the national order, one that would reunite all the elements needed for progress and civilization.[115]

The Sociedade Nacional de Agricultura's report of 1926 already contained some elements found in the constitution referred to above, as in the statement of Antonio Carlos Simões da Silva:

> I don't accept Black immigration because Brazil already has in its population a more people of this race than of other existing racial groups. It seems that simply to consider the entrance of a mass of individuals of the same race (Blacks) in large groups would disturb the balance of the existing wonderful harmony between these races. (The Blacks) would in time reproduce and take over the entire country, to the prejudice of the other races. Even for the good of Brazilian Blacks we shouldn't facilitate this type of immigration, because it would bring immigrants from other religions than that of Brazilian Blacks, who are fervently catholic, and who would lack the patriotic enthusiasm that our Blacks have for Brazil. [116]

It is important to note from the above extract that at this point the black Brazilian population is seen just as any other group of immigrants, of which the number of newcomers should be controlled in order to defend national sovereignty.

How the restrictions and the culture of racial/colour discrimination affected the Caribbean immigrants is still a matter to be thoroughly investigated. At present the researchers whose findings were used in this article point to a very minimal social advance among the immigrant descendants, especially after the second generation. While work on Italian, German, Portuguese and Spanish immigrants and their descendants point to a rise in social status that is reflected in political and economic power, with these groups along with the Lebanese being among the richest families and part of the political elite in Brazil, the same did not happen for Barbadians.

Analyzing the Brazilian 2000 census, Marcelo Paixão has shown that Blacks in Brazil are a majority of the illiterate, and that Afro-Brazilians spend fewer years in school than those classified as Whites. This affects their economic inclusion and

reinforces poverty among and discrimination against Blacks. According to Paixão, any policy to curb illiteracy must also tackle racism in the educational system and in the job market, considering that even after acquiring an education many Blacks and mulattoes are discriminated against in the labour market, which also contributes to low self-esteem and discourages them from pursuing higher levels of schooling.[117] Costa Ribeiro has shown in his statistical analysis of racial discrimination in Brazil that for those Blacks who actually achieved higher levels of education, the prospect of equal payment and position in the job market is quite low. Moreover, for the minority that manages to overcome poverty, the possibility of losing their economic status is greater than for whites.

> (…)white, *pardo*, and black males with origins in higher classes (professionals, managers and small employers; and routine workers, technicians, and independent workers) have distinct chances of immobility and downward mobility. Whites have more chances of immobility on the top of the class hierarchy than *pardos* and blacks, while the later have more chances of downward mobility.[118]

Already in the 5th generation, the saga of Caribbean people who emigrated to Brazil did not follow the path of their compatriots who went to places like the United States, Canada or England. They are middle class people, proud of their past but still facing the economic limitations that almost a hundred years ago prevented them from going back to their homeland. An exception seems to be the Blackman branch in Vitória, where the descendants of Wisley (Wosley?) Blackman and Adriana Beckles became part of the elite. Hermínio Blackman was a famous teacher and journalist who had seven daughters. As the family kept the Barbadian tradition of putting education first, all his children got university degrees: there are two medical doctors, a lawyer, a journalist, a psychologist, an English teacher and a certified nurse. Also as part of the same branch, in Niterói we found Wesley Blackman, also a grandchild of Wisley, a pastor at the Baptist Church.

Hundreds of Millies, Louises, Catharines and Elisas had gone to Brazil more than a century ago, alongside with Raymond, Norman, Frederick, James and many others, following dreams of a better life. If they found what they were searching for is difficult to tell. Today, particularly in Porto Velho, Manaus, Victoria and Belem, one

can find the positive influence of the *Barbadianos* and their hard work, constructing the infra-structure for modernization, but especially in building the educational system and in participating in diverse areas of the economy. Millie has a place in the Barbadian culture through the music. Now it is time to acknowledge her important place in the history not only of Barbados, but of the Caribbean and Brazil.

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