

***As Belas Ovelhas Negras:***  
**The Consequences and Effects of Colonialism on Afro-Brazilian Women**

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**Abstract:**

This paper argues that Brazilian governance and its institutions play a pivotal role in the sustained discrimination and invisibility suffered by Afro-descendant Brazilians. The paper expounds on the seminal work of Frantz Fanon and his structural violence; the Manichean scheme and colonized blackness ideologies; and Michel Foucault’s abnormal and biopower theoretical arguments vis-à-vis power that shapes social and political hierarchies and communal relationships within and across cleavages. The juxtaposition of both philosophers’ theoretical arguments provides a deeper insight into how the Brazilian state apparatus represses Afro-Brazilians, rendering their experiences invisible and negating possibilities for socio-economic and political growth while purporting equality for all Brazilians, irrespective of skin color. The study will demonstrate that the construction of particular Brazilian public policies advances the economic success and achievement of non Afro-Brazilian societal groups while marginalizing Afro-descendant Brazilian cleavages who are passively participating and accepting their lower socio-economic and political status. The paper will focus on public policies that sexualize or commodify Afro-descendant Brazilian women.

## Introduction

Brazil, a former Portuguese colony, ranks as the world's sixth largest economy<sup>1</sup> and will host the 2014 FIFA World Cup<sup>2</sup> and the 2016 Summer Olympics Games.<sup>3</sup> The western powers of the international community recognize Brazil as the "darling" nation of Latin America because of its rich culture, diverse population, geographic beauty and its competitive economic status. Afro-Brazilians' colonial legacy and the African Slave Trade have left an indelible mark on Brazil's Euro and Afro descendant society. Palpable racial inequalities exist among Brazilians with whites at the top of the political, educational, and socio-economic scale and non-whites at the bottom of that scale. Up until the 2001 International Race Conference held in Durban, South Africa, the Brazilian elite purported a national dogma of a racial democracy – the inexistence of a racial narrative signifying equality for all citizens irrespective of color. At this conference, Brazilian social activists revealed indisputable facts demonstrating that Brazil's Afro-descendant population, the second largest in the world after Nigeria,<sup>4</sup> endures intense societal, socio-economic and political exclusion.

Scholars Dávila and Hanchard<sup>5</sup> posit the difficulties suffered by Brazilian non-whites directly correlate to their persistent colonized versus colonizer relationships in Brazil's post-colonial epoch. The research question guiding this paper questions how the state expects to balance the socio-economic conditions experienced by marginalized Brazilian Afro-descendants

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<sup>1</sup> This information is from the Central Intelligence Agency fact book. The ranking is based on nominal GDP <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/br.html>

<sup>2</sup> Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). <http://www.fifa.com/>

<sup>3</sup> Official Website of the Olympic Movement. <http://www.olympic.org/rio-2016-summer-olympics>

<sup>4</sup> National Policy Institute. 2013 Population statistics [www.nationalpolicyinstitute.org/publications.php?b=population](http://www.nationalpolicyinstitute.org/publications.php?b=population)

<sup>5</sup> The arguments offered in Jerry Dávila's *Race and Social Policy in Brazil, 1917-1945* and Michael George Hanchard's *Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil, 1945-1988* propose that the current marginalized status of Afro-descendant population involves a colonial legacy that is promulgated psychologically within contemporary Brazilian society

while some of the state's public policies promulgate a paradoxical narrative of 'black inferiority.' This paper hypothesizes that the discourses of colonial power remain so deeply embedded in the psyches of contemporary Brazilians that Afro-descendants reject their blackness believing that it affirms their colonized inferiority. Brazilian state-sanctioned public policies seem to promote Afro or Black pride when the nation experiences economic gains. For instance, the policies that precipitate higher fiscal returns from an international tourist clientele fascinated with the Afro-Brazilian martial arts (*Capoeira*) or the *Candomblé* – an African inspired religion. Likewise, other state-sanctioned public policies render Afro-Brazilians invisible and promote a colonially racist ideology; a perception from which the state actively distances itself.

This paper argues that Afro-descendant Brazilians suffer profound societal inferiority because of Brazilian public policies that benefit from the mystique of Brazilian blackness or that re-affirm a colonial legacy of racist dogma predicated on the lowliness of the black subject. The juxtaposition of Frantz Fanon's structural violence, Manichean scheme, and Colonized Blackness concepts, and Michel Foucault's theories relative to Biopower and the Abnormal frame both hypotheses.

The study begins with a discussion regarding Brazil's contextual political history and the nation's societal inequality and exclusion suffered by non-whites. Next, the study charts Frantz Fanon's theoretical frameworks of structural violence, Manichean scheme and colonial blackness, and Michel Foucault's theories regarding biopower and the abnormal to elucidate how Brazil remains under a veiled system of colonialism that propagates a narrative of black inferiority, affirming the colonizer versus colonized relationship. With such a structure in place, it is highly unlikely that the embedded sense of inferiority that plagues Afro-Brazilians will disappear. The

paper presents this argument through the analysis of two public policies that are associated with Afro-Brazilians women.

The first public policy provides English and Spanish classes<sup>6</sup> to Brazilian prostitutes in preparation for 2014 FIFA World Cup that brings a highly lucrative male tourist industry seeking to be sexually pleased by Brazilian prostitutes who are more likely to be Afro-Brazilian women, as they have historically been eroticized and sexualized. The second public policy regards the offering of free plastic surgery procedures to the poor, for example, the correction of the 'negroid' nose surgery. The paper contextualizes both policies to illuminate their conflicting meaning concerning blackness and how Afro-Brazilian women underwrite this conflict due to their consciousness of inferiority framed in Fanon's and Foucault's theoretical frameworks.

The paper concludes with assumptions about the status of Afro-Brazilians: that they operate under an unconscious narrative of a colonial 'racial democracy' that remains a psychological common sense for elite policy makers and underprivileged non-whites. This perpetuates denied access to the various avenues purported to change the social and economic conditions of this large Brazilian population.

### **Brazil's Political History in Context**

Brazil's historical political structure began as a Portuguese colony and transitioned through five periods of governmental rule: (1) an early republican period of constitutional oligarchy from 1889 to 1930; (2) a revolution and Getúlio Vargas' first regime from 1889 to 1930; (3) competitive politics from 1945 to 1964; (4) military authoritarianism from 1964 to 1985 and (5) re-democratization from 1985 to the present (Skidmore, 2010). Amidst these five phases of

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<sup>6</sup> Brazil is a Portuguese speaking nation

governance, a remarkable consistency existed such that whites systematically remained in positions of power and the included portion of civil society from a political and economic point of view. Alternatively, people of color maintained their status as the underbelly of civil society by being excluded politically, socially and economically. Though Brazil's representative democracy model required every citizen over the age of 16 to vote, its political history placated the priorities of the elites at the expense of the rest of its citizens (Skidmore, 2010).

The Portuguese discovered Brazil during the early 1500s.<sup>7</sup> The middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a turning point for the Portuguese who resorted to the African slave trade for free labor. Eventually, the white Portuguese minority ruled over a large population of African slaves and a smaller cleavage of indigenous people. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a stratified society solidly existed with black slaves at the bottom, freed blacks and indigenous people slightly above the slaves, a middle class comprised of the by-product of miscegenation between whites and blacks and indigenous Indians and, at the top, pure Portuguese whites and other Europeans who owned the majority of the land and steered all governmental and social decision-making.

Brazil became officially independent from Portugal on September 7, 1822 at the request of King Pedro II who instituted a parliamentary constitutional monarchy, modeled after the British system of rule. This system propagated some constitutional reforms while mollifying proponents of the monarchy. New local political systems developed that made no concessions for the lower socio-economic groups.<sup>8</sup> The dissention of the marginalized that ensued after the abolition of slavery in 1888 triggered a successful military coup d'état in 1889. Brazil became a new democratic republic. The military coup promised egalitarianism, yet the foundational elitism of a

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<sup>7</sup> Fausto, Boris. 1999. *A Concise History of Brazil*. Cambridge University Press

<sup>8</sup> Skidmore, Thomas. 2010. *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*. Oxford University Press

white ruling class over a large body of colored marginalized peoples persisted.<sup>9</sup> In 1895, the election of first president of Brazil pursuant to a new constitution guaranteed the universal right to vote; however, a literacy prerequisite precluded a large cross-section of the population from voting. As in the past, patronage and clientelism continued in federal, state and local politics. Purportedly, these undercurrents remain a part of the present-day democratic system in Brazil, led by President Dilma Rousseff, a member of the PT party.<sup>10</sup>

### **Racial Inequality and Exclusion in Brazil**

Although Brazil labeled itself a ‘racial democracy’ until the mid-1990s, non-whites experienced severe exclusion, inequality and discrimination. Reiter’s (2009) *Negotiating Democracy in Brazil*<sup>11</sup> delved into eugenics science’s instrumental role in ‘whitening’ the population. The author referred to the ‘inferiority’ of darker-skinned people as opposed to the ‘superiority’ of white people proposed by scientists and doctors. Ultimately, the classification of people in groups based on their ability to be ‘good’ citizens (the whites) and uncivilized or criminal (the non-whites) remain a driving force behind the inequality between the groups in today’s Brazilian society.

Race is a highly variable construct in Latin America, where racial ideas typically refer to “blacks” (Africans brought to the region as slaves and their descendants), “whites” (European colonists who conquered and settled the region and their descendants), and “Indians” (the indigenous population that inhabited the region before European conquest). A key feature of race in Latin America is the idea of *mestizaje* or *mestiçagem* (“mixture” in Spanish and Portuguese,

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<sup>9</sup> Skidmore, Thomas. 2010. *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*. Oxford University Press

<sup>10</sup> Garman, Christopher. 2013. Information from “Brazil riots: Tens of thousands of demonstrators march through city streets in widespread anger over gov’t corruption.” *New York Daily News-World*. (1) (06/17): 3-7

<sup>11</sup> Reiter, Bernd. 2009. *Negotiating Democracy in Brazil: The Politics of Exclusion*. Boulder: First Forum Press. Chapter 4

respectively), which refers to the biological and cultural blending that has taken place among these three populations. In Brazil, these racial categories stand with whites as *brancos(as)*, the mixed *mestizaje* population as *pardos(as)*, and the blacks as *pretos(as)*. Historian Degler argues that the “mulatto escape hatch”<sup>12</sup> privileges the *pardo* population whose physical features are more Europeanized and therefore more palatable. On the other hand, *pretos* or the darker skinned Brazilians whose phenotypical features are classically Afrocentric, experience demonstrable and extreme stigmatization.

This classification process spearheaded an interesting phenomenon in terms of Brazilian race relations. The denial of race notwithstanding, the level of opportunity, education, social mobility and socio-economic success Brazilians attained correlated directly with their skin color. According to Arias, Yamada and Tejerina (2004),<sup>13</sup> the ‘whiter’ a person appeared, the higher his or her glass ceiling became. Furthermore, the more educated a person became, the more likely that person succeeded socio-economically. The percentage of whites attending college far exceeded the percentage of non-whites securing a higher education.<sup>14</sup> The authors’ analyses of the 2000 PNAD data<sup>15</sup> suggested that whites earned 50% more than their non-white counterparts in the same position, irrespective of employment type. In terms of employment types, whites typically secured professional, more stable employment as opposed to non-whites, who were more likely to work in blue-collar jobs or in the service industry.

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<sup>12</sup> Degler, Carl N. 1971. *Neither Black Nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press

<sup>13</sup> Omar Arias, Gustavo Yamada, Luis Tejerina. 2004. “Education, Family Background and Racial Earnings Inequality in Brazil.” *International Journal of Manpower* 25 (3/4): 355-374

<sup>14</sup> Dávila, Jerry. 2003. *Diploma of Whiteness: Race and Social Policy in Brazil, 1917-1945*. Durham North Carolina: Duke University Press

<sup>15</sup> Brazilian Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios (PNAD) 2000 data

When average monthly income was compared to average years of education, the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE) data set analyzed from 2001 to 2009 it demonstrated that in 2001, whites benefited from more years of education than non-whites by 30%. In 2009, the education achievement gap between whites and non-whites dropped to 21%. Despite the number of years of education completed, whites' average income by minimum wage was 4.5 in 2001 and reduced to 3.2 in 2009. For non-whites, the average income by minimum wage decreased from 2.20 in 2001 to 1.80 in 2009. The data from 2001 and 2009 of average years of study compared to average income by minimum wage demonstrated the consistent inequality suffered by non-whites as opposed to whites in Brazil. The data is compared from 2001 to 2009 as the state implemented a number of public policies to ameliorate the conditions of Afro-descendants such welfare reforms and affirmative action plans in higher education pursuant to the 2001 Conference on race in Durban, South Africa. Census data collected in 2009 showed some improvement in the conditions of Afro-Brazilians, yet disparities in income and years of schooling have led to continued and surreptitious societal exclusion. Furthermore, the data presented disproved the existence of Degler's mulatto escape hatch – the percentages of average of years of study versus the average income by minimum wage for *pardos* and *pretos* likened in 2001 and in 2009.

**Table 1**

Average Years of Study with Corresponding Average Income by Minimum Wage for Years 2001 & 2009

Years	BRAZIL					
	White/Branca		Black/Preta		Brown/Parda	
	Average Years of Study	Average Income by Min. Wage	Average Years of Study	Average Income by Min. Wage	Average Years of Study	Average Income by Min. Wage
2001	8.0	4.5	5.7	2.2	5.6	2.2
2009	9.2	3.2	7.4	1.8	7.2	1.8

Source: IBGE Data 2001 & 2009



## Frantz Fanon

Franz Fanon's seminal works on the issue of decolonization and the psychopathology of colonization distinguish him as a 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher. Based upon Franz Fanon's postcolonial theoretical framework in *The Wretched of the Earth*<sup>16</sup> and *Black Skin, White Masks*<sup>17</sup> using Brazil as a case study, this paper argues that the country's Afro-descendant population has undergone Fanon's structural violence conception but because of colonized blackness embedded in the mind, cannot reject the Manichean scheme exerted on the psyche through structural violence. Moreover, Afro-Brazilians' adoption of Fanon's colonized blackness further exacerbates their substandard societal status and emphasizes their inequality and exclusion.

The structural violence concept refers to an international capitalist system created through the expansion of Europe into Africa, the Americas and Asia where a mercenary global system of exploitation forced billions of people into extreme hunger, suffering and poverty. The Manichean scheme refers to the philosophical dualism of the colonizer versus the colonized. The rejection of Fanon's Manichean scheme dictates that in order to reverse the psychic violence that debases the colonized through racism and colonization, the subject must reject his de-humanization and self-hatred through a radical claim of self-redemption against the colonizer, achieved by an uncompromising will towards action that Fanon calls violence. Colonized blackness denotes the application of a psychoanalytic theory, where colonized blackness is the historical interpretation and the social indictment that describe the dependent and inadequate feelings of black people in the white world. The black subject loses his or her native cultural origin and embraces the culture

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<sup>16</sup> Fanon, Frantz. 2004. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press

<sup>17</sup> Fanon, Frantz. 2008. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press

of the colonizing country. The culture of the colonizer becomes embedded in the psyche of the black subject and engenders a profound complex of inferiority that materializes through the appropriation and imitation of the colonizer's culture.

The entrenched legacy of colonialism in the psyche of white and non-white Brazilians alike stimulates Afro-Brazilians denouncing any African ancestral and cultural ties as those ties imply white colonizers' discourse of Afrocentric negativity and inferiority. This translates into self-loathing for Afro-Brazilians with some finding opportunities to reverse their blackness by changing their physical appearance for example. Fanon suggests that this trend inverts if a reversal of the Manichean scheme occurs by way of a nation's liberation, applying the same structural violence from the colonized onto the colonizer. This reversal facilitates a new humanism that equalizes society and generates a new sense of embraced blackness.

In the case of Brazil, Fanon's arguments are convincing up to the discussion around new humanism, the idea that the reversal of structural violence and the Manichean scheme advances a racially balanced society. As mentioned previously, Afro-Brazilians' standing in the lowest societal, socio-economic, educational and political tiers is easily situated in the nation's historical colonial history. Afro-descendants actively appropriate a Europeanized 'whiteness' to experience social and economic inclusion. Brazil's colonial ties were not broken through liberation, but rather through King Pedro's decree of independence. Based upon Michel Foucault's theory of the abnormal and biopower, the likelihood of a reversal of structural violence is questionable.

## **Michel Foucault**

Philosopher Michel Foucault posits that the norm represents a standard measured against man and formulated by the human sciences. An obedient child, a psychologically stable man, or a

law-abiding citizen becomes the standard of the norm. Conversely exists the abnormal: the criminal, the deviant, or the insane man. Without norms, the abnormal does not exist. For Foucault, norms constantly evaluate and control the social body but also frame those who cannot or will not conform to those norms as harmful to modern society.

Foucault's analytics move the discourse of sovereign power toward the microcosmic workings of power in social and political life. Foucault's analyses juxtapose the levels of representation of historical discourses on the social sphere and the levels of practices in the workings of power to a form of disciplinary power. Foucault defines disciplinary power directed at bodies as biopolitics, a manner to govern populations that centrally guides practices of racial division and domination. Foucault states: "Unlike discipline, which is addressed to bodies, the new nondisciplinary power is applied not to man-as-body but to the living man, to man-as-living-being; ultimately, if you like, to man-as species where discipline seeks to divide the multiplicity into individual bodies that can be kept under surveillance, trained, used, and, if need be, punished this other technology addresses a "global mass," a "biopolitics" of the "human race"" (Foucault, 243).

For Michel Foucault, the right to kill in the context of biopower enables racism, in essence, the "killing of the other sub-species aims at the survival of the species as a whole" (Foucault, 255). At the level of representation, "killing, or the imperative to kill, is acceptable only if it results not in a victory over political adversaries, but in the elimination of the biological threat to or the improvement of the species or race" (Foucault, 256). According to Foucault, this form of discourse enables relations between colonization, "colonising genocide," and retorts relating to criminality, madness, and mental illness. When the above statement is understood at the level of practices, the enemy can no longer be conceived in biological terms, as Foucault implies, but becomes politically

subjective. Racism as a practice transforms into a political construct.

Foucault argues a new form of racism in the modern age, what he calls 'racism against the abnormal' through a genealogy of psychiatry. As he writes:

With this notion of degeneration and these analyses of heredity, you can see how psychiatry could plug into, or rather give rise to, a racism that was very different in this period from what could be called traditional, historical racism, from ethnic racism. The racism that psychiatry gave birth to in this period is racism against the abnormal, against individuals who carry a condition, a stigmata, or any defect whatsoever. It is a racism, therefore, whose function is not so much the prejudice or defense of one group against another as the detection of all those within a group who may be the carriers of a danger to it. It is an internal racism that permits the screening of every individual within a given society. (Foucault, 316-17)

Hence, a black person raised in a white society remains black, and the problem with blacks, according to this racist discourse, frames blacks as anatomically, mentally and culturally inferior. Biological theories of degeneracy and eugenic arguments develop, implying sub-specimens of a race where internal racism emerges. The misfits or the poor – Foucault's abnormal, develop into a sub-race.

Foucault contends that the state exercises biopower in its racist dogma, empowered to kill, not in the literal sense but rather figuratively, as in a political death, rejection, exclusion or expulsion. Slavery, or the total seizure of life that qualifies as political death, embodies biopower that normalizes and optimizes the body, allowing the state's practice of racism. Foucault asserts that the state's biopower divides the species into races: the race and sub-race as well as fit and unfit specimens of a race. Certain populations become targeted as dangerous, warranting their enslavement or political death in order to protect and manage life. Racism, therefore, allows killing to co-opt into a politics of life that characterizes how societies are defined. This racism against the abnormal works at both regulatory and disciplinary levels. Overcoming racism infers not simply to interrogate ideologies but to defy technologies of power.

What gives power its hold, what makes it accepted, is quite simply the fact that it does not weigh like a force, which says no, but that it runs through, and produces, things, it induces pleasures, it forms knowledge, it produces discourses; it must be considered as a productive network which runs through the entire social body much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression. (Foucault, 35-6)

Foucault's theses of the abnormal and biopower efficaciously characterize the historical marginalization of Afro-descendants since their enslavement and the embedded psychological acceptance of their plight. This psychological acceptance, as exhibited by an appropriation of 'white' culture and of Fanon's colonized blackness, has greater implications. Moreover, both theses demonstrate how Brazilian societal structure becomes and remains binary with whites as the norm and non-whites as the abnormal. Afro-Brazilians' ensuing exertion of power onto themselves that bolsters their inferior identity translates into the impossibility for the reversal of Fanon's structural violence and Manichean scheme. The opportunity for Fanon's new humanism to emerge becomes unattainable.

### **Free English Classes for Prostitutes!**

Afro-Brazilian women historically experienced sexual brutalization, a culture established by white Portuguese slave-masters that persists through the contemporary white elite Brazilian society. African slave women understood their role in relation to their masters, both male and female. For their female masters, they cooked, cleaned, nursed their masters' babies, and raised their children. For their male slave masters, they worked in the fields tending to sugar cane or the crop of choice, but they also satisfied their sexual pleasures. These women had no choice in their involvement with these men, with sexual encounters resulting in a brown (*pardo* or *moreno*) population attributable to miscegenation.

Brazil struggled as the last nation in the Americas to abolish slavery.<sup>18</sup> With the pressure of slaves fleeing to free territories, and the win of the Paraguay war in 1870 where slaves who fought were promised the opportunity to self-purchase, “the Servile Element” arose. The proposal to reform the Servile Element transformed into the Free Womb Law of 1871.<sup>19</sup> This law guaranteed the freedom of children born in slavery after they turned 21 years old.<sup>20</sup> Afro-descendant female victims of violent sexual encounters by their masters exercised their rights to secure freedom for the children created through rape.<sup>21</sup> Also, these women plead their cases to higher authorities when their masters treated them egregiously, or when masters manipulated the Free Womb Law to perpetuate the servitude of their children born out of violent sexual encounters. Manumission and the Free Womb Law of 1871 also commanded the social mobility of female slaves who demanded remuneration for bearing their masters’ children and for poor treatment.<sup>22</sup>

Even before the abolition of slavery, Manumission and the Free Womb Law, Afro-descendant women almost exclusively yet unwillingly participated in prostitution for their owners’ financial and social benefit. Freed men exploited these women as common-law wives or concubines.<sup>23</sup> According to Karasch (1987), female slave owners sent their Afro-descendant

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<sup>18</sup> Five years had passed since the slave-holding Confederacy had been defeated in the United States. Cuba was in the midst of a war of independence in which the matter of abolition played a crucial role. In Europe, English and French public opinion ran adamantly against the slave-holding polities still in existence

<sup>19</sup> Refer to Abreu, Martha. 1996. "Slave Mothers and Freed Children: Emancipation and Female Space in Debates on the 'Free Womb' law, Rio de Janeiro, 1871." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28, 567-580

<sup>20</sup> Muhammad, Patricia. 2004. "Critical Essay: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Forgotten Crime against Humanity as Defined by International Law." *American University International Law Review* 19, 883

<sup>21</sup> Muhammad, Patricia. 2004. "Critical Essay: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Forgotten Crime against Humanity as Defined by International Law." *American University International Law Review* 19, 883

<sup>22</sup> Collins, Jane-Marie. 2009. "'Uteis a si e a sociedade' or a Brief Guide to Creolisation in Nineteenth-Century Brazil: Black Women, Mobility, Marriage and Markets in Salvador da Bahia (1830-1888)." *European Review Of History* 16, no. 3: 413

<sup>23</sup> Karasch, Mary C. 1987. *Slave Life in Rio De Janeiro 1808-1850*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP

slaves to whorehouses to generate income.<sup>24</sup> Prostitution became even more prevalent after the abolition of slavery, growing into a modern day legal institution where Afro-Brazilian women's sexualized and objectified bodies pleased white and black men.

The docile and servile expectations of Afro-descendant Brazilian women translates into their commodification and exclusion from the public sphere. Their history as slaves, a patriarchal society, and their attempt to survive the fable of Brazil's racial democracy collectively preclude them from being recognized politically, educationally and socio-economically. As posited by McLucas:

According to Oliviera, "...both women and Afro-Brazilians are stereotyped as passive, irrational, dependent, and lacking in leadership and entrepreneurial ability". With these perceptions being linked to both of these groups they are already alleged incapable of performing their job regardless of their qualifications. These inflammatory stereotypes are far from a true depiction of these groups that originate from the paternalistic and racist views that dominate this culture (88).<sup>25</sup>

Few Afro-Brazilian women secure professional positions, and even fewer participate in politics. Therefore, the majority of Afro-Brazilian women live in abject poverty, and most support themselves by working in the private sphere as domestics or as prostitutes.

Today, Brazil is famous for attracting men from all over the world to enjoy their voluptuously bodied and golden tanned women, a sex industry that generates significant national revenue. In anticipation of the 2014 FIFA World Cup, a weeklong event whose tourism income predictably will greatly boost Brazil's economy, the state currently offers free English and Spanish classes through the prostitution bureaus in the cities hosting World Cup matches. These classes

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<sup>24</sup> Refer to Lauderdale-Graham, Sandra. 1991. "Slavery's Impasse: Slave Prostitutes, Small-Time Mistresses, and the Brazilian Law of 1871." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Oct., 1991), pp. 669-694. The article reports on two cases where two slaves brought charges against their female slave owners for cruel and unusual treatment as prostitutes. Both slaves won their cases

<sup>25</sup> This quote is taken from article: McLucas, Kristopher, 2005. "Race and Inequality in Brazil: The Afro-Brazilian Struggle in the Racial Democracy." *Culture, Society and Praxis*. 4:1, 85-90

facilitate a better exchange of information between Brazilian prostitutes and the international tourists who pay for the fulfillment of their sexual fantasies. Cida Viera, President of Belo Horizonte Association of Prostitutes, states: "English will be very important to communicate with clients during the Cup. They'll have to learn how to work out financial deals and also use a specialized vocabulary with sensual words and fetishes."<sup>26</sup> SENAC (*Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Comercial* or National Service of Commercial Learning), a Brazilian institution that provide free professional educational services for effective employment and commerce practices to the public, offer the free classes. Brazil's SEPPIR – *Secretaria de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial* or the Department that Promotes Racial Equality, created in 2003, endeavors to eradicate the racial disparities experienced by Brazilian non-whites.<sup>27</sup> Both SENAC and SEPPIR seem to have conflicting interests. On the one hand, SENAC facilitates for Brazilian prostitutes who by and large are probably classified as *morenas* or *pardas* to speak English to their 'johns' during the World Cup, ensuring a succinct language exchange that clarifies the pricing for various sexual pleasures and promotes the tourists' return to Brazil. On the other hand, SEPPIR does not obfuscate SENAC's offering of English classes to Afro-Brazilian prostitutes. After all, these prostitutes exemplify the meaning of fantasy to men all over the world: bodies made to sexually satisfy, spirits of promiscuity that enjoy satisfying men, and bodies and spirits that combined, will lend to the sexual ecstasy that men seek. The state apparatus is more interested to secure higher revenue with a lucrative tourist sex industry than it is to dissuade prostitution practiced by Afro-Brazilian women. Unfortunately, these women seek learning to speak English to make more

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<sup>26</sup> CNN interview on January 9, 2013 by Shasta Darlington – "Ahead of Brazil World Cup, Free English Classes Planned for Prostitutes"

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.seppir.gov.br/>



money using and abusing their bodies rather than securing the classes to become more marketable in a traditional workplace.

The experience of Afro-Brazilian women across history typifies Fanon's structural violence of the psyche and his theory of colonized blackness, as these women seem to embrace their position as prostitutes. Brazilian public officials suggest that this phenomenon insinuates a class issue because these women have no other opportunity. According to Caldwell<sup>28</sup>, Afro-Brazilian women can secure an education yet becoming educated does not ameliorate their opportunities, suggesting that the problem they experience transcends the problem of class. Yet, utilizing Foucault's framework, the state apparatus exercises biopower such that Afro-Brazilian women represent the managed and controlled sub-race. The state benefits economically at the expense of a cleavage marred with such a profound inferiority complex that it embraces its position in the world of prostitution.

### **Want To Be Beautiful? Correct Your Afro Features!**

The highly contested topic of *mestiçagem* in the context of Afro-Brazilian women should not be considered as a full-fledged negative discourse. Rather, a two-faced inclusive and exclusive relationship emerges with the acceptance of blackness with an infusion of Eurocentric racialized features that translate into sensuality and sexual objectification but never interpreted as beautiful. What is the meaning of a woman's blackness being simultaneously inclusive and exclusive or sensual but not beautiful? Answering these questions requires an understanding Brazil's conception of beauty.

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<sup>28</sup> Second chapter of Caldwell, Kia Lilly. 2007. *Negras in Brazil: Re-Envisioning Black Women, Citizenship, and the Politics of Identity*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Just as a dominant eugenics' ideology infiltrated Brazil's government at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to improve the nation's population through whitening,<sup>29</sup> that same ideology also infiltrated the psyche of Afro-Brazilians. The miscegenation that occurred between Afro and Euro descendants created a mestizo population that ranges in features from completely Eurocentric -- thin lips, fair and straight hair, narrow nose -- to completely Afrocentric -- thick lips, coarse and dark hair, and broad nose. And there exists a multitude of variants of both in between. This phenomenon, called *mestiçagem*, prevails throughout Latin America. The almost romantic idea of *mestiçagem* requires full analysis, particularly in the context of Brazil.

Brazil's social mobility, earning capacity, education, and socio-economic success depend upon either being white or looking white. The whiter a person appears, the more likely he or she succeeds. When considering that a husband and wife could produce children with phenotypically white features to children with phenotypically black features, and that the children who look the whitest are considered the favorite, one understands the strong stigma attached with looking Afrocentric.<sup>30</sup> In addition, when the media depicts beauty as blond haired, light eyed and fair skinned, the benchmark for beauty becomes whiteness. Afro-Brazilian women with dark skin experience rejection and exclusion due to factors they cannot control, or so one would assume, but not always.

In order to have a chance to succeed in Brazil, Afro-Brazilian women alter their physical appearances to resemble white women as much as possible. These alterations range from benign, such as straightening hair with chemicals to more drastic measures like getting plastic surgery to

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<sup>29</sup> Dávila, Jerry. 2003. *Diploma of Whiteness: Race and Social Policy in Brazil, 1917-1945*. Durham: Duke University Press

<sup>30</sup> Refer to Twine, France Winddance. 1998. *Racism in a Racial Democracy: The Maintenance of White Supremacy in Brazil*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press and Caldwell, Kia Lilly. 2007. *Negras in Brazil: Re-Envisioning Black Women, Citizenship, and the Politics of Identity*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press

Europeanize their noses. The self-esteem of Afro-Brazilian women directly correlates with looking as white as possible. Edmonds (2010) *Pretty Modern*<sup>31</sup> provides riveting information in terms of the psychological effects tied to blackness and the steps Afro-Brazilian women take to manage their blackness, in particular, the chapter relating to a 'Negroid' nose needing to be corrected to mitigate an Afro-Brazilian woman's state of depression.

These steps imply a negative and exclusive narrative of blackness, but there is a parallel positive and inclusive narrative of blackness: the one of sensual black beauty, specifically pertaining to a full and round butt. Afro-Brazilian women believe that having an attractive body, including a round butt, will afford them some opportunities. The only opportunities that seem available are being sexualized and objectified. Certainly, to be an attractive prostitute requires having a sensual posterior that is lifted and round and a face with a straight nose. Plastic surgery facilitates these modifications. The dichotomous relationship between inclusive and exclusive two-faced narratives of blackness dates back to slavery when blackness was considered filthy and ugly while African slaves had the body types that lent themselves to sexual fantasy.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, blackness is never beautiful, not unless it looks like whiteness, but it is expected to be sensual and sexual. Rebhun (2004) discusses the stigmatization of blackness experienced by Afro-Brazilian women who have learned to internalize 'their filthiness and ugliness' while pretending that it does not exist by laughing at themselves.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Edmonds, Alexander. 2010. *Pretty Modern: Beauty, Sex, and Plastic Surgery in Brazil*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press

<sup>32</sup> Pinho, Patricia de Santana. 2006. "Afro-Aesthetics in Brazil." Nuttall, Sarah (editor), *Beautiful/Ugly: African and Diaspora Aesthetics*. Durham: Duke University Press, p.266-289

<sup>33</sup> Rebhun, L. A. 2004. "Sexuality, Color, and Stigma among Northeast Brazilian Women." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* no. 2: 183

Here again, the Brazilian state apparatus contributes to a two-faced narrative of Afro-Brazilian women inclusion/exclusion relationship that depreciates blackness. “Whitening” plastic surgery procedures (nose jobs, etc.) are paid for by the state under the guise of mitigating diagnosed conditions of depression or lack of self-esteem. For the state to pay for these procedures, there can be long wait times, but poor Afro-Brazilian women willingly wait or seek cheap and unsafe procedures secured on credit in order to “whiten” themselves.<sup>34</sup> According to Edmonds (2010), Afro-Brazilian women go as far as getting breast reductions in order to be commodified and objectified, although large breasts are also sought by European and white American women. In this manner, Afro beauty is positive and inclusive, but only on a seasonal basis (during Carnival<sup>35</sup>) and for tourism, particularly the sex industry correlated with tourism. The state’s involvement in this contradictory narrative does illuminate its ideological belief that blackness is inferior. Surgeries paid for by the state to correct a “negroid” nose and Afro-Brazilian women actively pursuing these procedures at the expense of their health is affirmation of Fanon’s colonized blackness and structural violence theories. Strikingly, one could assume that Foucault formulated his biopower theory using Brazil as his basis of inference. The state exerts biopower to manage the minds of a marginalized population by propagating a message of Afro abnormality and by offering free surgical procedures to correct these abnormalities. Regrettably, Afro-Brazilian women assimilate colonized blackness and are so profoundly inculcated in Brazil’s biopower that they actively attempt to whiten themselves, by any means necessary.

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<sup>34</sup> Edmonds, Alexander. 2010. *Pretty Modern: Beauty, Sex, and Plastic Surgery in Brazil*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press

<sup>35</sup> Carnival is the largest tourist attraction in Brazil, bringing tourists from all over the world for the purposes of entertainment and experiencing Brazilian culture. <http://www.bahiacarnival.info/>

## Conclusion

Colonialism is an enigmatic phenomenon. Its effects on populations and their respective cultures continue to be written about as the academy seeks to have a greater understanding of how distant empires have had such profoundly transformative influences on nations in the Global South. Populations and cultures of colonized lands produce an admixture of colonizers, colonized and the indigenous and become extremely complicated topics to analyze in the postcolonial era. Latin American countries largely practice a representative democratic model yet a colonial structure persists: a dominant group resembles the previous colonizers, and an inferior group represents the previously colonized. Frantz Fanon theorizes about the persistent colonizer versus colonized binary that remains in place until the colonized forcibly takes back his humanity to reverse the structural violence and Manichean scheme wielded on him. In the meantime, the colonized embraces a colonized blackness that keeps him inferior by mimicking his colonizer's culture. Michel Foucault hypothesized that biopower and biopolitics facilitate for the abnormal, Afro-Brazilians in this case, to accept their marginalized position due to their acceptance of omnipresent power validating an inferior position.

Brazil's societal imbalance exemplifies the dilemma of the colonizer versus colonized relationship. The Brazilian white cleavage enjoys economic, political and educational advantage while the Brazilian non-white cleavage experiences complete and total disadvantage. Afro-Brazilians represent the lowest stratum on all societal levels, a fact that has persisted since slavery. The state apparatus reportedly attempts to allay the racial disparities suffered by Afro-Brazilians, but those attempts are dubious for a number of reasons. The Portuguese colonial legacy is evident in today's Brazilian political and economic leadership, and Afro-Brazilians have

digested and adopted the stigmatization of blackness promulgated by white elites to the point that they deny any Afro identity despite Brazilian public policies that appear to embrace an Afro identity. This paper examines some but there are others such as the new affirmative action quota policy for higher education that was unanimously ratified in October 2012, appearing to inspire racial equality using a class narrative within federal universities although the policies that promote racism as a form of exclusion have not been overturned.<sup>36</sup>

The question of how to mitigate these issues remains outstanding. According to Foucault's theoretical frameworks relative to the abnormal and biopower, postcolonial relationships probably will persevere. As for Fanon's arguments, Brazil did not undergo a liberation movement but rather underwent an independence movement spearheaded by a Portuguese king seeking asylum within a nation that his ancestors colonized. Hence, colonial ties were never broken post-independence, substantiating Fanon's continual Manichean scheme and structural violence theories.

Social movements spearheaded by Afro-Brazilians could effectuate some societal balancing, but Fanon's problematic of colonized blackness still exists. How does an Afro identity become affirmative? As long as people of African ancestry suffer self-loathing, a trend that appears to plague Afro-descendants from colonized nation states, Fanon's new humanism cannot materialize. In the meantime, while Foucault's theories are not embraced by the entire academy, a deeper exploration of his theories relative to power become imminent as they illuminate how colonial relations seem to have developed and maybe can elucidate how to break those colonial ties.

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/03/17/in-brazil-where-racial-mixing-is-welcome-social-integration-doesnt-equal/>

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