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Brazil's Whiteness Unveiled: A discussion on race with
Cooperifa participants, Capelinha residents and Universidade Federal de Bahia
(UFBA) students and professors

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Brazil's Whiteness Unveiled: A discussion on race with
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by

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Abstract

Brazil's Whiteness Unveiled: A discussion on race with
Cooperifa participants, Capelinha residents and Universidade
Federal de Bahia (UFBA) students and professors

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This thesis analyzes attitudes about race in Brazil in three research sites conducted in 2008 and 2009. The first research site was Salvador, Bahia where I asked a total of twelve students and professors their opinions about the importance of discussing race relations in Brazil and their views on Affirmative Action. These participants were mostly white middle-class students and professors. The second site was in the periferia of Zona Sul in the neighborhood of Capelinha, São Paulo. I interviewed four residents about the importance of race in Brazil. Here, the residents were mostly non-white, from various states in the north and northeast, and were working class. The last research site was Cooperifa, which is a spoken word movement located near Capelinha in Zona Sul. I found that non-white periferia residents subscribed to the same racial attitudes as the middle-class white participants when discussing the importance of race as a social phenomenon. In turn, I found that Cooperifa participants perceived white privilege as a social phenomenon that needs to be challenged. This thesis examines the links across these three sites and draws from theories of whiteness to understand them.

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INTRODUCTION:

SARAU (SPOKEN WORD) AT COOPERIFA

A cool breeze pushes its way through a room hosting a crowd of one hundred onlookers. Near the entrance of the pavilion room stands a black man wearing jeans and a white t-shirt, holding on to a microphone. The crowd sits in plastic chairs in front of him, and others stand in small groups near the entrance. There are kids, teenagers, young adults, and all ages present. The man begins to recall Brazil's historic signing of the Lei Áurea (Brazil's Golden Law, which was the last of a series of laws passed in May 13, 1888 requiring the state to dismantle slavery). He reminds the audience that the letter to terminate slavery has never been carried out. Instead, he explains that individuals in the periferia experience a relationship with the state that resembles slavery, yet no one regards it in this manner. His words are heavy as iron, and the mood turns dense as he reveals a dark ever present-past. He squints and looks throughout the crowd, as if asking if we understand him. By this point there are many heads nodding in agreement. He continues to describe the all too familiar violence that people experience in the periferia. In particular how the police and also rival neighborhoods ignite the violence. He goes further in his denunciation and demands that the violence needs to stop. When he nears the end of his song, his friend steps onto the stage and begins to recite at the top of his lungs a poem by Duguetto Shabazz (a Brazilian street poet from Cooperifa):

Mesmo que eu tenha que cruzar terras e mares
Eu vou pra Palmares, Eu vou pra Palmares
Mesmo que no caminho me sangrem os calcanhares
Eu vou pra Palmares, Eu vou pra Palmares
Mesmo que os inimigos contra nós sejam milhares
Eu vou pra Palmares, Eu vou pra Palmares

Enfrento os Borba Gato e os Raposo Tavares
Eu vou pra Palmares, Eu vou pra Palmares...
(Duguetto Shabazz)

Even though I have to cross lands and seas
I am going to Palmares, I am going to Palmares
Even though on the way my heels should bleed
I am going to Palmares, I am going to Palmares
Even though the enemies against us are millions
I am going to Palmares, I am going to Palmares
I combat Barba Gato and the Raposo Tavares
I am going to Palmares, I am going to Palmares
(English Translation by Lorena Martinez)

As his friend recites the lyrics of the poem, the crowd is prompted to repeat: “eu vou pra Palmares, Eu vou pra Palmares” (“I am going to Palmares, I am going to Palmares”). The poem visits the historic *quilombo*¹ (maroon community) called Palmares, which was founded by black runaways and allies in the border of Pernambuco and Alagoas during the height of the white Portuguese Empire.² Palmares adopted a partly “African-based political system”, which replaced the racial subjugation of slave-society (Anderson, 1996, p. 558). Palmares was located in the woodlands, a far from Portuguese cities. At first the settlement was very small, but after seven decades it attracted over ten thousand people (Skidmore, 1999). There are many reasons why individuals would go to Palmares, yet one reason stood out; Zumbi, one of its leaders, was a lifelong challenger of the slave system in Brazil. Quilombos, as a system of resistance, were a space of refuge where blacks were not enslaved. Throughout its history the Portuguese and Dutch wanted

¹ Throughout the Americas different settlements challenged slavery similarly to Palmares. They appropriated different names, such as maroon communities and Palenque. For more information reference (Price, 1996).

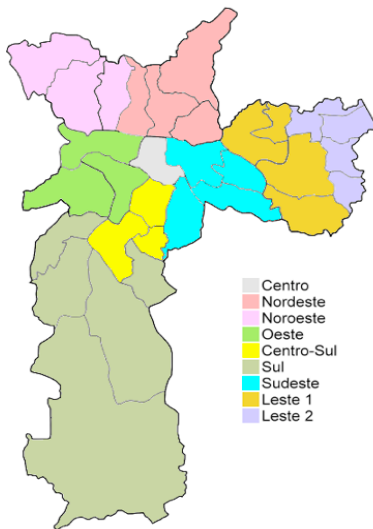
² For more information on this topic reference Schwartz, S.B (1992).

to demolish Palmares, and they finally succeeded by demolishing the city and capturing Zumbi.³ Today the link between Palmares and the periferia can be established on various levels. The most direct one is that blacks in the periferia want to challenge the white establishment. The poet who calls for Palmares today does not mean that the periferia residents need to leave to a far away settlement. He implies that transformation emerges from within the periferia, through group or individual transformation. Recollecting Zumbi and Palmares means that there is the need for the periferia members to get involved with the anti-racist project.

This story is a snapshot of my experience in August 2009 at the Cooperifa spoken word meetings in the neighborhood of Chacara de Santana, in Capão Redondo, São Paulo. The spoken word meetings are held every Wednesday nights beginning at eight and ending around eleven. During the Cooperifa meetings individuals recite their original poems and songs. Also, many participants recite Brazilian and foreign poetry. The crowd ranges in size, ranging from fifty to a hundred people. The topics discussed are very diverse, yet I noticed that many participants wrote literature about how whites have power in Brazil and how this should not be normal.

³ Zumbi was captured for one year before the Portuguese crown murdered him.

Figure 1.1 São Paulo City District Map



Available at: Prefeitura de Cidade de São Paulo:

Above I have provided a map of Sao Paulo. Cooperifa has their meetings in Zona Sul, which is the top green portion of the map. Downtown is located in the gray section of the map.

Cooperifa is a spoken word that was established nine years ago by Sergio Vaz and other community organizers. In a way, the movement was launched to counteract the alternative practice of “periferia residents to sit and watch television at night” (Peçanha, 2006, p.60). The spoken word requires individuals in the periferia to challenge what surrounds them, such as violence in the periferia or disenfranchisement from the white-middle class in Brazil. Cooperifa promotes various projects besides the spoken word such as book drives, movie nights, as well as cd and poem-book releases.

What makes Cooperifa important to my research is how they address race and its affects on life experiences throughout the periferia. Many participants from the Cooperifa

movement (non-black) say that they have learned in the meetings that race is an important issue to address. I spoke to a man named Carlos, who is a white rapper and an active participant of Cooperifa. He explained that he perceives black oppression and resistance everyday. He said, “when [my friends] make [derogatory] jokes, or even when they say negative things, I stop them. I have learned that this is a negative way of thinking. Here blacks have power when they organize....” (August 26, 2009). Carlos’s story affirms that participants of the movement do not view race as a passive topic, but instead acknowledge that current racial ideology in Brazil excludes blacks and invests in whites. Importantly, the emphasis to address race and anti-racism is not the typical perspective within the periferia. I complemented my study in Cooperifa with ethnographic research in a nearby neighborhood called Capelinha where I found that Capelinha residents interpreted race very differently. In fact, I found that they share similar ideas about race as white middle-class Brazilians. I was familiar with the white middle-class Brazilian perspective on race because I also did ethnographic research in Salvador, Bahia at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) in May-August of 2008. I conducted interviews with white middle-class students and professors on the topic of Affirmative Action and found consistent attitudes regarding their perception of the importance of race in Brazil. Strikingly, I realized that there is a strong popular discourse circulating throughout Brazil that suggests that race is not an important social factor to understand. This is an opinion accepted by white Brazilians and non-white Brazilians alike. Yet, there are groups that defy those norms and challenge the fact that Brazilian racial ideology needs to be transformed.

This thesis is divided into two chapters. The first chapter introduces fieldwork that I conducted in Salvador, Bahia with university students and professors and their attitudes about race. I will juxtapose their discourse on race with individuals who live in the periferia as well as a spoken movement group called Cooperifa. This thesis will shed light on two interlocking questions. The first question is: How do participants from UFBA, Capelinha, and Cooperifa regard the importance of race as a social phenomenon? The second question is: What do these opinions reveal about whiteness and its consequences? I found that the middle-class white participants from UFBA and working class non-whites participants from Capelinha invest in whiteness by supporting racial attitudes that fail to see race as a fundamental social phenomenon as well as its larger social consequences. I argue that the disregarding of race is a norm that contributes to the maintenance of whiteness. Whiteness is understood as a “normal” process; when in fact it is: “an artificial construction [that] always comes to possess white people” (Lipsitz, 1998, p. viii). Whites and non-whites alike do not discuss privileges along racial lines because addressing them would rupture their ideological and material benefits. For example, if whites at UFBA recognized their racial privileges they would be forced to reconsider the accumulation of their symbolic and material wealth. By disregarding the importance of race, whites and non-whites accumulate wealth and privileges oblivious to the fact that the local and global system thrives on racial exclusion. It should be stressed that whiteness is a process where not only whites attain resources and power. In fact, throughout history non-whites participate in a positive investment in whiteness by “currying favors with whites in order to make gains”(Lipsitz, 1998, p. 4). At UFBA, one

black student supported the white middle-class discourse on race. This discourse teaches blacks that they must play by their rules in order to receive the benefits of whiteness. I illustrate best this process with the following observation. The larger social consequences of ignoring the importance of race are gripping and extensive. Many authors throughout the Americas have registered the extent in which: life chances, opportunities, education, and the prison system are racialized (Winant 2001, Creshaw et al. 2005, Hanchard 2004, James 2007). Ignoring race as a social phenomenon shows an investment in racial inequality that goes beyond the localized spaces of Salvador and Sao Pualo. In fact, this process (of disregarding the importance of race) has attained a global reach (Winant 2001, Vargas 2008, James 2007, Gordon 2007).

Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) and tampering with White privilege

As the poet relives his war stories in the periferia of São Paulo, professor Almeida at the Universidade Federal de Bahia (UFBA) shares his opinion about the current implementation of the race-based Affirmative-Action policies.⁴ Professor Almeida racially identifies as white. He is a relatively short man, in his early fifties, and has been teaching at UFBA for the past twenty-three years. When I asked him to express his thoughts leading up to the approval of the Affirmative Action policies. He commented that he was mainly interested in the decision because his eighteen year old son would be taking the *vestibular* (Brazil college level entrance exams) to be admitted into UFBA. Once Affirmative Action was implemented, forty-five percent of the newly admitted

⁴ The policies implemented at the UFBA were both class and race (black and indigenous) based. I questioned individuals on their opposition of race-based Affirmative Action. Some were opposed to race, but not to class (this will be explained further in chapter one)

students would be self-identified black or indigenous and/or come from public schools.⁵ This meant that privately educated students (like Professor Almeida's son) would see the number of spaces that historically went to privately educated white students reduced by half. To counteract the slim chances his son was facing in UFBA, Professor Almeida opted to send his son to another highly ranked university called Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP), which had fewer restrictions for students who attended private schools. I conducted the interview two years since the implementation of *cotas* (another name for Affirmative Action in Portuguese), and even though his son was attending UNICAMP he still looked at inclusion policies with deep resentment. He avows: "These new policies of Affirmative Action are discriminatory. They are *very* [he screeches loudly] discriminatory. Us... [he grabs Lorena Martinez's arm] *whites* are harmed by these policies. I am discriminated against because of my skin color! There should be *no* "social payback" [duvida social] for blacks, or those who studied in a public school. The government is at fault for not preparing individuals for entrance into Higher Education. It is not my fault nor my son's" (Professor Almeida, June 23, 2008).

The professor's response is loaded with a wealth of information that allows me to dissect white privilege. The first is the *expectation* he has for his son to enter into the university, because he has completed the pre-requisite of a private education. He never mentions the social capital he and his son have gained by their education and how this is linked to their race. He also mentions that his son *has an option* (go to UNICAMP). Many black students in public schools do not have this option. Their parents are not

⁵ UFBA equates more points onto a student's final vestibular scores if a student has attended public school and/or is black/indigenous.

university professors, and they have been channeled away from even considering going to the university through various institutional structures (violence, lower quality education, economics of funding school). The opinions of Affirmative Action in UFBA speak abundantly of a dominant way of discussing race and race relations. First, one should note how whites see their existence as neutral and unaccountable to black/indigenous exclusion. We can just recall some statements made by Professor Almeida where he expresses that he, nor his son, do not owe anything to blacks, indigenous or publically educated students because the system has failed them. Professor Almeida is providing us a wealth of knowledge towards understanding that whites are detaching themselves from other the exclusion experienced by other groups.

At UFBA I interviewed a total of twelve students and professors from various departments including (1) Law, (5) Mechanical Engineering, (1) Medicine, (2) Pharmacy, and (3) Physics. They racially identified as (9) *branco* (white), (2) *misto* (mixture of various races), and (1) *negro* (black). Their class identification ranged from middle class to lower middle-class. Even though the students/professors were white, most of them did not racially identify as such. Instead they claimed that there were *mestiço* or *Brasileiro* (Brazilian), based on their ancestry.⁶ When asked how they identified themselves based on their physical appearance according to the census most students/professors stated that they were white.

My exploration of the university community made evident that the participants defended a common way of discussing race; by avoiding it altogether. The UFBA

⁶ This term is historic and has a variety of meanings, but relating to my research individuals defined *mestiço* as meaning mixed race.

interviews revealed that participants did not see anything wrong with how race relations currently take place in Brazil. Instead they offered other “more important” reasons why blacks are excluded. I chose to conduct research at UFBA on anti Affirmative Action because as many social scientists have argued, the best education and educational opportunities has gone to white Brazilians historically (Gomes In Cavalleiro 2001, Davila 2003, Munanga 2009). Various studies (mostly done in the U.S.) have shown how whites have benefited from “unseen” privileges, like family collateral, wealth, networks, education, and so on.⁷ These “unseen” privileges allow whites into spaces of privilege that are not usually available to non-whites. What I am emphasizing is that race is the most important determinant towards deciding who enters the university. Also, this reflects on the topics that are chosen to discuss in academia. Throughout Brazil, whites have had access to the university, which means that knowledge production in the social sciences reflects an investment that does not challenge historic constructions of whiteness. Throughout Brazil few academic scholars are interested in analyzing the normativeness of whiteness and most study race without addressing how different *races* influence one another. Michael Hanchard makes note of this, stating: “there is preoccupation of Brazilian social scientists with the study and analysis of races or ethnic groups in society and not the *relations* among them” (Hanchard, 1994, p 7). The lack of

⁷ See literature such as: Thomas M. Shapiro, *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Douglas Massey, *Categorically Unequal: the American stratification system* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007).

scholarship on white privilege suggests that the university lacks commitment to understanding how privilege, knowledge and race intersect. It is my belief that this oversight leads to the continuation of the current racial regime and the perpetuation of white supremacy.

Figure 1.2 Map of UFBA in Salvador, Bahia



Google Search

Figure 1.2 above is a map of the city of Salvador. The small red tags represent the various departments/campuses at UFBA. After conducting my interviews in UFBA, I next spent a couple of months the following year conducting research in the periferia of Zona Sul in São Paulo probing if residents believed that race is an important social phenomenon to address.

CAPELINHA:

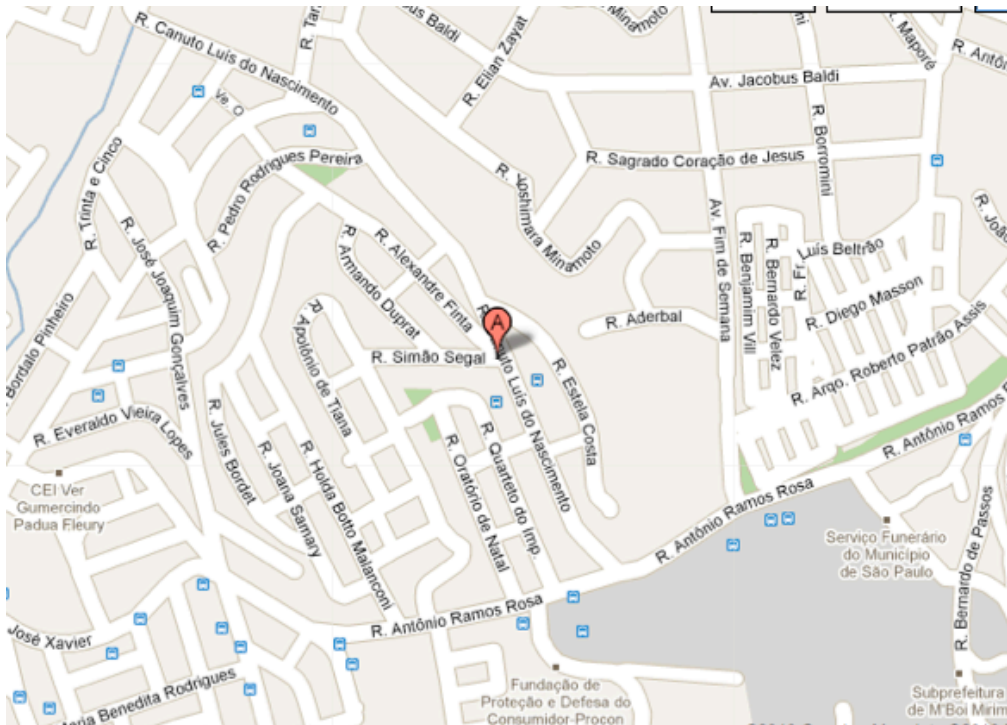
In Capelinha, São Paulo a man named Danilo opens the door to his small shop. He rejoices to have finally been able to open his new store where he will be selling clothing for children and women. I ask Danilo how he racially identifies and he says black. He was born in Bahia and arrived to São Paulo at a young age while his family remained in Bahia. There is a strong sense of work ethic in the way Danilo discusses his experience in São Paulo. He is convinced that he will be able to earn any amount of money as long as he works hard enough. Danilo never mentions whether race influenced his upbringing, education, earnings, or his experience as a business owner in the periferia. I ask Danilo if opportunities in Brazil are different for blacks than for whites, and he asserts that there is nothing different between the races except for their skin color. Then I ask Danilo what he thought about racism. He explains “The truth is that it [racism] *does not* exist....We are a mixture....Everyone has a choice. Here [in Brazil] there is choice. If you want to date a black, white, yellow person you can....Even the higher classes, even those who have studied,....even the Brazilian media knows that there is *not racism*.” Danilo continues to talk about how important it is to see past race. It seems that there is a link between Danilo’s response and the UFBA responses. Both seemed unwilling to discuss race. This showed in the perplexity on their faces when I inquired about race and race relations. I became aware that the norm to avoid race transcended racial and social-economic categories.

ARRIVING TO ZONA SUL, SÃO PAULO

I was first introduced to conduct fieldwork in Capelinha and Cooperifa, São Paulo after living with my roommate named Luis in Campinas. I took graduate courses at UNICAMP the spring semester of 2009. We became roommates and then good friends. He told me that when he was very young his family moved to Capelinha from Salvador. He spent his teenage years there until relocating to Marilha, São Paulo as an undergraduate. With the assistance of the Ford scholarship, and his determination to continue with graduate studies, he eventually arrived to Campinas to complete his master's program. I had the opportunity to live with Luis and two other black identified roommates. Throughout my stay in Brazil I learned how my white skin color marked my social status. For instance, my first day in Campinas I had arranged to stay with a black doctoral student named Ana Luisa, from Bahia. At the time she was renting a small room behind a large house in Barão Geraldo (near Campinas). On my way to Ana Luisa's house from the airport a woman offered me a ride. As soon as we drove up to Ana Luisa's house, Ana Luisa arrived outside to greet me. The Brazilian woman assumed that she was the maid and asked her to help me with my luggage. Both Ana Luisa and I let the woman know that she was my friend and the woman awkwardly changed the subject. Her assumption was that black Brazilians are maids. Throughout my stay in Brazil I would learn the extent in which my white racial category shapes my perspective and the way I am treated compared to my black friend and colleagues. Besides experiencing the university atmosphere in Campinas, São Paulo. I was interested in understanding the popular discourse about race in the city of São Paulo starting with Capelinha.

Luis and I left Campinas in late July of 2009. It took us two and a half hours to arrive to São Paulo from Campinas by bus. From the bus station we took the metro to Estação de Luz and from there we walked to Praça Santa Isabel. We arrived to Praça Santa Isabel and boarded a bus titled Chacara de Santana 609-F. When we first boarded the bus the streets were flat and wide. As soon as we started driving into the periferia, the streets became windy and slim. As the bus continued on its rout, the racial composition became more black and less white. The bus ride from Praça Isabel lasted around forty minutes; then we walked to Luis's families' house.

Figure 1.3 Map of the neighborhood of Capelinha



Google Search

Capelinha consists of the streets, Simao Segal, part of the street Rua Canudo Luis do Nascimento, and it stops at Rua Alexandre Finta (see Figure 1.3 above). Most of the houses located in Capelinha are made of concrete and one story tall. The houses in Capelinha were built around thirty years ago. They are not clustered together, like some of the newly built neighborhoods (the Capelinha residents called them favelas).

Luis introduced me to many of his neighbors in Capelinha. Many of them already knew his family, since they had lived in the area for so long. Luis helped me build rapport with the neighborhood members. Frequently, I would walk up and down Rua Luis do Nascimento to better acquaint myself with neighbors that Luis did not know. After one month of living in Capelinha I began to approach the neighbors to request an

interview. There were a couple of individuals who refused, but the majority of them were willing to participate. The participants responded that they came from the following states: Bahia, Pernambuco, Sergipe, and Ceará. They racially identified as: 1 (brown) *morena*, 1 (indigenous) *indigena*, 1 (black) *negro*, and 1 (brown-white) *pardo-branco*.

All the residents that I interviewed in Capelinha live within a fifteen-minute bus ride from Cooperifa, none stated that they attended the spoken word meetings. When I asked why, many participants stated they had never heard of the movement. Another stated because their Wednesday nights are mostly spent at home taking care of their children. Another person stated that he would rather save his money, because the bus trip to arrive to Cooperifa would add up every month. Another participant explained that he had heard of the Cooperifa movement, but was not interested in it because he felt that talking about race relations does not change the reality that blacks are losing and whites are winning.

COOPERIFA

When I was living in Capelinha I would reserve Wednesday nights in order to visit Cooperifa. The Cooperifa meetings took place in a nearby neighborhood called Chacara de Santana, which is located inside the district of Capão Redondo (see figure 1.4 below). Capão Redondo is inside the sub-district of Campo Limpo.

Figure 1.4 Administrative Map of Jardim São Luis and Capão Redondo



Wikipedia

Participants of Cooperifa are multi-racial, and a large percentage of the participants are brown/black. I interviewed various individuals who identified as: (3) *negro* (black) and (1) participant identified as *branco* (white).⁸ The interviews lasted around one hour and a questionnaire was referenced throughout the interview. They were conducted in public spaces like street corner-stores, outside of the Cooperifa meetings, or

⁸ One of the participants that racially identified as black said that he is socially considered white.

at tattoo parlors in Capão Redondo.

Many of the Cooperifa participants had finished high school and many had ambition to continue on with higher education. Besides the formal instruction, many of the Capelinha members also had accumulated cultural capital from attending meetings in Cooperifa. In many ways I found it easier to talk about race using academic terminology that individuals in Capelinha and Salvador found difficult to speak about. Many Cooperifa participants found my questions about race and race relations engaging and appeared comfortable in long conversations about whiteness. Many of the members would critique whiteness relatively in-depth and unapologetically. There was a sense of urgency to change Brazil's current situation, such as capitalism; or as some participant's emphasized, white racial superiority. Lastly, it became evident how much time individuals of the movement accessed information about race. Many of them referred to magazines and various documentaries during our interview.

CHAPTER OUTLINES:

This thesis is organized into two chapters around the following primary questions: How do participants from UFBA, Capelinha, and Cooperifa regard the importance of race as a social phenomenon? What do these opinions reveal about whiteness and its consequences? The first chapter exposes the opinions stated by university professors and students about the recent race based Affirmative Action policies. I learned that white middle-class participants of UFBA disregard race as an important social phenomenon and would divert talking about race and prefer more "neutral" topics. The second chapter incorporates interviews conducted with participants from the Cooperifa movement and

Capelinha residents in the periferia of São Paulo. The interviews in Capelinha aligned more with the white middle-class ideals and values on race at UFBA, while the Cooperifa ruptured some notions of white privilege. My fieldwork conducted in these three sites provides a new way to reflect on how whiteness manifests itself in attitudes regarding race and race relations in Brazil.

CHAPTER ONE:

Anti-Affirmative Action at UFBA

It was a bright day in Salvador, Bahia and I was on a bus going from my residency in Sete de Setembro to the Mechanical Engineer department at the Universidade Federal de Bahia (UFBA). The university campus was not far from where I was living, and the ride was very smooth. I passed by cleanly swept streets with mostly white Brazilians walking on the sidewalks. Along the way to UFBA I passed by majority black neighborhoods; but once I was neared the campus the racial profile became mostly white again. Winter vacations were about to begin for most students, which meant that the campus would soon be empty. I was anxious to ask students and professors for their opinions on Affirmative Action. Part of my anxiety disappeared as I learned that most students opposed Affirmative Action. At the same time, it was concerning because most of the people I approached opposed a policy⁹ that I believe addresses black/indigenous exclusion from higher education.

Within minutes after arriving to the university I approached a white undergraduate named Ronaldo. When asking him about Affirmative Action, Ronaldo quickly answered that he did not agree with it because it separates Brazilians racially one

⁹ As I continued to conduct fieldwork in the next couple of weeks, I found that eight out of ten individuals contacted at UFBA campus were opposed to Affirmative Action.⁹

from another.¹⁰ Ronaldo's stance on Affirmative Action was exactly what I wanted to understand. Ronaldo agreed to participate in an hour-long interview.

My primary research question was: How does the university community adhere to their own privileges when discussing Affirmative Action? By approaching this question I wanted to understand the viewpoint of its main beneficiaries of whiteness.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR WHITENESS:

Aiming to distinguish my respondent's educational experience from the average black Brazilian (who mainly attends public school), I asked Ronaldo if he attended a private school prior to attending UFBA. Ronaldo told me he went to private school. As it turned out, seven out of the eight students (all white) stated that they studied at private schools (with the exception of one publicly educated student who studied at CEFET¹¹). Three of the six professors that I interviewed had gone to public schools. I then asked Ronaldo what prepared you for one of the most competitive vestibular tests in Brazil?¹² Ronaldo remarked that years of private school prepared him for the difficult vestibular. He explained that he had many years of instruction in math, sciences and also two foreign languages. He also described that in his last year of high school he enrolled in intense

¹⁰ There are different Affirmative Action policies in Brazil. Some are race based (black and indigenous) and others are class based (if individuals attended public universities). Universities factor race/class into the total vestibular scores in order to account for inequalities. On average white middle-class students attend private school and not public.

¹¹ The Centro Federal de Educação Tecnológica (CEFET) are considered public high schools, even though their access is restricted. Individuals coming from these schools have better quality education than most city public schools, yet are able to access the university through the cota system.

¹² Each department has their own vestibular test depending on the specialization of the degree. Hard sciences will emphasize math, sciences, physics etc. Social sciences will emphasize analytical writing skills.

study sessions (*cursinho*) to prepare him for the vestibular. Both of these privileges, the level of education as well as the *cursinho*, are not readily available to publically educated students.

Ronaldo remarked that his parents paid for his schooling that cost around 100,000 Reais (around 43,000 U.S. dollars) throughout his entire middle to high school years.¹³ This is not the typical amount most Brazilian families can pay for their children's education. In fact most working class Brazilians cannot afford private school and instead send their children to public schools. If we are to introduce race into the equation, private school is not an option for most blacks. Blacks make up more than the majority of those living under the poverty line in Brazil. Inequality means that black families do not have resources to invest on their children's education no matter how much they would like to. Inequality also means that whites have more opportunity to send their kid to private school since they make up the majority of middle and higher income families.

Ronaldo described that since he went to a private middle school and high school he knew his next step was to enter the university. He describes this path as "the natural cycle" by stating: "There was never a doubt in my mind that I would not enter into the university. It was the "normal" trajectory (*era a trajetória normal*) of the students that have the possibility to enter into the university."¹⁴ One hundred percent of my colleagues went to the university." Ronaldo was not the only student that reported that his private

¹³ The student said that he and his brother did the calculation on how much their private education cost their parents.

¹⁴ When Ronaldo states "those who have *possibility*" it appears as if he is using a code word for white middle-class student.

school experience would “naturally” lead to the university. In fact over five other expressed the same idea.

Ronaldo’s private education experience is further supported by the policy known as “meritocracy.” Meritocracy is the realization that an individual achieves a position based on his/her effort. Merit (within the university) is achieved by obtaining excellent vestibular scores. The fact that Ronaldo attended private school automatically places him at a closer proximity to fulfilling the “merit” (vesibular score) it takes to enter into the university. Ronaldo did not mention that implementing Affirmative Action jeopardizes meritocracy, but many professors at UFBA did. One white Physics professor stated:

I think the university is space where people enter with merit. Not because of how little they earn or the color of their skin....people should not be forced to advance [progredir] because they are black, or because they are poor; instead people need to advance because of merit. The university is not a fundamental right. Fundamental rights are: health, elementary school, work, not to work seventy hours. Those are rights. The university is for whom has merit, who are able to compete... for those who are knowledgeable. I think that [Affirmative Action] is discouraging. The person enters with a favor and he/she gets used to favors. Someone who is getting their degree to become a doctor; the patient is not going to look at him and say he is black he is competent. The patient is going to accept him because he is competent based on his skills alone. (Physics Professor, June 20, 2008)¹⁵

¹⁵ Eu acho que a universidade é por quem tem mérito. Não somente a cor de pele...esses cotistas não tem que progredir porque eles são negros o porque eles são pobres. A verdade eles tem que progredir porque eles tem mérito. A universidade não e direito fundamental. Direito fundamental é saúde, educação básica, lazer, trabalho, não trabalhar setenta horas por semana. Essas são diretos. E para quem tem mérito, quem tem competência, quem tem conhecimento. Eu acho que e destimulante. Ele entrar com um favor e poderá ser levado assim, por eternamente vencedor de favores. Isso não vai acontecer. Senhor medico informado a seus clientes olham para ele porque ele e negro? Se ele e competente ou não for competente.

Reflecting back to the question of white privilege, one problem with the above comment is that the professor did not recognize that merit does not take into consideration the different opportunities and starting points students are given throughout their lives (and how this has been a historic racialized process). The middle-class white students that I interviewed started from a very advantageous space. This space is very different from some of the individuals that I later interviewed (see Capelinha interviews in chapter two). In order to find out how starting points are racialized in Brazil, I asked Ronaldo to describe the racial makeup of his private school. He explained the following: “Even though Salvador is eighty percent black; out of a classroom of fifty students, only two are black. It’s something that is normal...[it is] something that comes from history. Some people notice [the racial differences] and comment, but they do not contemplate it for too long. People do not ask themselves why things are this way [such few blacks in places of privilege]. They sit and pay attention to the class lectures,” he continued “It is not as if whites are “on top” [em cima] of blacks. It is not like it is “normal”, it is just an observation of mine...and that is it” (Ronaldo, Mechanical Engineer Undergraduate at UFBA, June 15, 2008).

Students/professors accept the fact that different educational spaces are racialized (blacks go to public schools and whites go to private schools). This is significant to my research because I am able to observe that group benefits are acknowledged (when he *did* state that there is a racial difference); yet the process in which it occurs is silenced. Ronaldo provides some clues, by stating that there are individual benefits that he received by not “noticing race.” These individual benefits actually amount to group benefits;

almost all the students in the Ronaldo's classroom were white; even though they do not acknowledge it openly. Hence, individuals do not see themselves or their experience within a historical context of whiteness, but instead explain their achievements as individual accomplishments independent to race.

Next, I asked Ronaldo if he could describe why there is a difference between black and whites in terms of opportunities like going to universities? This was the first question that requested my participants to address race and in particular race relations. This is when I noticed that talking about the topic of race seemed almost socially unacceptable. Repeatedly my participants quickly wanted to stop talking about race and talk about other more "pressing problems" such as economics. Ronaldo, stated:

There might be, economic divisions dividing the two, but I do not think there are social divisions [here he encodes social to mean racial difference]. The racism that exists in the U.S. never arrived to Brazil. In Brazil things are all right [tranquilo]... I think that Bahia [is the] space where less racism exists... because there are more blacks. For example, you have a kid [who's] maid is black, or you go to the street and you see blacks. It is difficult to incubate racism when you have a relationship with blacks or whites (Ronaldo, Mechanical Engineer Undergraduate at UFBA, June 15, 2008).¹⁶

Another student, from the Pharmacy department Paola also emphasizing that Brazil's racism is based on economic disadvantages after I asked the following question: Do you think not having blacks in the university is racism?

¹⁶ Não exatamente não.. divisão pode ter, a divisão econômica entre os dois. Mas, a divisão social não existe. O racismo que existiu nos Estados Unidos, não chegou. Aqui é muito tranquilo.Eu acho que aqui em Bahia seria o lugar do Brasil onde existe menos racismo por causa da proporção do negro.... Quem tem criado junto com ao negro, junto com o branco, junto com todo o mundo. Tipo se a criança seu trabalhando em sua casa e uma negra, se você sai a rua a muitos negros. É difícil criar um racismo ao relação a isso.

It depends on your point of view. If people want to prohibit blacks from entering the university...yes....but I think that this is a social problem more so than a problem about race. Now here in Salvador, it [race and class] are related...because the majority of people of lower class are black...or Afro-descendants...And that makes it related...but not required.¹⁷

Ronaldo and Paola's interview reveals that there is an automatic response given in order to avoid the topic of racism in Brazil. There are multiple responses that were used, such as class or comparing race relations to the U.S. segregation laws. An important question that stems from this observation is: How are individuals who are working on anti-racism in Brazil going to combat racism when individuals argue that racism does not play an important factor in exclusion? Many authors that work on anti-racism make the argument on the importance race is in shaping life circumstances (independent to other social phenomenon). For example two U.S. authors, Massy and Bullard, argue that environmental racism affects blacks regardless of class (Massy, 1997, p. 75; Bullard, 2000). Someone might ask the question, what does U.S. authors discussing blacks in the U.S. have to do with race relations in Brazil? Authors who write about anti-racism also make the argument about the similarities between racism in the U.S. and racism in Brazil is a result of global racial formation, which has left whites with a very different social and economic position in comparison to blacks independent to their nationhood.¹⁸ Just as

¹⁷ Depende do ponto de vista né...se as pessoas querem proibir as entradas de negros...sim..mas eu acho que nossa questão é muito mais social do que raça. Agora, aqui em Salvador, está relacionada. Por que a maioria das pessoas da baixa renda são de raça negra...ou afrodescendentes. E isso acaba ficando relacionada..mas não acho que é uma coisa definido.

¹⁸ Jared Sexton has highlighted that the black position in white supremacist societies is located at "a convenient point of reference, the putative bottom line" (Sexton In James, 2007, p. 209).

I mentioned in the beginning of the introduction, the reach of white supremacy is global, and has left a uniform black “other” throughout the world. This is what Gordon regards as the global process in which: “racialization and racism continue to structure social processes with devastating material effects and in which political collectivity empowers (Gordon 2007 95). Anti-racist activists and scholars must begin to hold individuals and institutions accountable for the default privileges available to whites and the contradiction of not discussing the importance of race. The racial attitudes that are described throughout this thesis address the extent to which whiteness is achieved by racial attitudes that disregard race as an important social factor.

Black and White Racial Inequalities

One important way to assess the importance of race as a social phenomenon was to ask students/professors why they believe different races have different opportunities. I asked: Why do you believe race based Affirmative Action policies were implemented at UFBA? I was interested to see if my participants would touch on white privilege and how it is being challenged. When explaining why Affirmative Action was taking place, all the participants referred to Brazil’s history of slavery to explain today’s racial exclusion. A professor in the Physics Department expressed this opinion:

There is no discrimination in Brazil. Instead what happened is that people want to change things from one day to the next [he believes that Affirmative Action policies are a drastic change]. In Brazil...after abolition, blacks were thrown into misery [jogados a miseria]. The government did not give any help to the newly liberated racial group; and instead they were forced to fend for themselves. And now, one

hundred years after Abolition, recognized blacks for experiencing all this exclusion (Physics Professor July 25, 2008).¹⁹

Another student who supports the same reasoning above was a pharmacy student named Paola. She stated: “Now I think this is all a historical process, from slavery and colonization. Both the outcomes of slavery and colonization have resulted in blacks to be related to lower classes” (Paola, Pharmacy student, 21 years old, UFBA, July 15, 2008). The problem with stating that slavery influences current inequalities silences the fact that there is a phenomenon called whiteness that has remained unchallenged since colonization, throughout slavery, and more importantly, during today’s white supremacist Brazil. Whiteness has “always been influence by its origins in the racialized history,” (which also requires that we conceptualize it within a broader framework of racial formation) (Lipsitz 1998; 3). There are deep social consequences for not addressing whiteness. By not addressing whiteness, the social barriers excluding blacks will continue to go unaccounted for while whites continue to advance and inequality will remain.

Almost all my research participants overlooked current white privilege, except for one professor who engaged with the idea that whites have received more resources historically than blacks and indigenous groups:

It is about time to repay certain injustices that happened throughout history that the white population committed against blacks and indigenous. Affirmative Action is a way of repaying the injustices that happened to blacks because of slavery. Blacks have had unprivileged jobs. The social treatment of blacks and indigenous was conducted in an inferior way compared to the rest of the Brazilian population. Brazilian elites are

¹⁹ Não a discriminação para todos no Brasil. Que acontece... é que eles querem mudar de um dia para outro..No Brasil..depois de abolição escravatura em 1888..eles foram jogados a miséria..Entendeu? Aqui no governo não ajudou...mas agora cem anos depois de abolição esta começando...reconhecer os negros por a exclusão...

usually white, and economically strong because of that historic robbery. And that is the history from which *cotas* [*cotas* means Affirmative Action in Portuguese] was created (Professor of Mechanical Engineering Interview 20, June 20, 2008).²⁰

Even though the professor above does critique an idea that hints on the notion of whiteness, he quickly retracts by explaining that there are more important oppressions to address:

At the same time we see racial injustices we cannot close our eyes and negate that a great parcel of the Brazilian population is completely in the margin of any possibility to accessing economic privileges. Many studies have shown that education is one manner in which upward mobility [acendencia social] occurs. (Mechanical Engineer Professor, Interview 20, June 20, 2008).²¹

I also spoke with Ronaldo about why blacks and whites might have different opportunities. Ronaldo explained that he understands why blacks would be critical of the private education system, yet explains that he does not share their opinion because he is not on the “loosing side.” He states:

Brazilians are very kept, which means that each person takes care of themselves [here he is thinking of racial groups. whites take care of whites and blacks of blacks]. People here do not think about fighting for

²⁰ E um tempo de resgatar um pouco um certo injustiça a população branca comentou contra a população negra e os descendentes dos índios. E um pouco de resgatar ..os negros foram escravos. Sempre tiveram empregos muito desqualificados. Os tratos sociais, e estratificação da sociedade dos negros e índios sempre foi ocupado sempre uma ocupação bastante inferior da sociedade brasileira. Os movimentos..ate por a quantidade dos movimentos índios e negros sobre os elites.. que em geral são do origem branca e economicamente também forte née surgiu esse assalto. Desse forma surgiram as cotas.

²¹ Mas no mesmo tempo não podemos fechar os olhos e deixar de reconhecer que ha uma grande parcela da população completamente ao margem de qualquer possibilidade de ascensão social. E todos os estudos na área social mostram que umas dos grandes possibilidades de ascensão individual na sociedade e via educação.

someone else. Individuals only critique when they are on the losing side. I understand that blacks have critiques. I do not know how to explain why they criticize...probably because of Brazil's history..because blacks were slaves... enslaved. That made things difficult between both races" (Ronaldo, Mechanical Engineer Student, June 15, 2008).²²

Measuring Race

Most of the participants who opposed race as a marker of difference said that if they were forced to choose they would prefer class based Affirmative Action.²³ Below, we begin to see how a mechanical engineer student named Enrique defends this idea:

Enrique: I do not like Affirmative Action based on race because the university does not know how to determine who is black and who is not.
Lorena Martinez: Why do you believe that a black person cannot be identified?

Enrique: I think that there is not a measurement...because there is not a color that is standard to determine who is black. The university needs to use a standard, such as income that everyone can agree with. It is easier and more clear to determine who is poor based on how much a student's parents earn; than it is to determine who is black and who is not. This is why I believe that income is the best way to determine Affirmative Action (Enrique, Mechanical Engineer Student, July 3, 2008).²⁴

²² O brasileiro é muito acomodado porque todos cuidam do seu. A gente não pensa como melhorar, como brigar pelos outros. Ele somente critica quando está do outro lado. Eu não sei como explicar o porque eles apóiam, acho que é história do Brasil mesmo. Como antigamente os negros eram escravos..escravidão..isso atrapalho bastante entre os dois raças.

²³ Class-based Affirmative Action determines students' qualifications for the program based on whether or not the student went to public school and how much the students' parents earn.

²⁴ Enrique: Eu não comparto dessa idéia de Ações Afirmativas.....a universidade não sabe diferenciar quem é negro...

Lorena? Porque você não é fácil saber quem é negro?

Enrique: Porque não tem um parâmetro...e....apenas assim...não tem um cor padrão.

Assim... como posso disser...esse que aparte de ser negro. A universidade precisa de usar um padrão como renda, determinante quanto dinheiro ganham os pais. Como vão abrir a porta para negros se não tem padrão! Tem que abrir uma cota que se tem um padrão de base; padrão de renda por exemplo...a parte de tal renda..para determinar ações afirmativas.

A majority of the participants agreed that race could not be used because there is no consensus on who is black and who is not. Interestingly enough, when it comes to the racialization of crime it was evident that they had a clear idea of who is black. Take for example another Mechanical Engineer student who remarked the following:

Lorena Martinez: Is there racism in Salvador?

Interviewee: Of course there is racism in Salvador, like anywhere in the world. Here if you see a young man, that is totally ragged with a suspicious face, you unfortunately discriminate, even though you do not want to. Unfortunately, most people who rob here in Salvador are black (Mechanical Engineer, July 28, 2008).²⁵

What this quote reveals is that when resources are involved, such as higher education, the identifiability of blacks easily switches according to convenience. The controversy of “not being able to measure race transcends the university space. Many of the general Brazilian population highlight this problem. A recent survey conducted with the Folha Sao Paulo newspaper found over 126 color categories are used to answer the question: What color are you?²⁶ (Qual e sua cor?)²⁷ Many groups use this example in order to argue that race cannot be measured since there are so many categories. In order to bring clarity to this Robin Sheriff, who worked in Rio de Janeiro studying individuals

²⁵ Lorena Martinez: Existe racismo em Salvador?

Mechanical Engineer Student: Eu tenho certeza que a racismo aqui...tem em qualquer lado do mundo. Mas, aqui se você vê algum rapaz que esta todo largado, com uma cara de mal, que normalmente, sem querer discriminar, são os negros. São os negros que roubam a grande parte (Enrique July 28, 2008).

²⁶ What color are you (*qual é sua cor*) literally means what color is your skin.

²⁷ For more information on this reference Sheriff, 2001.

describe either color (*cor*) or race. She found that there is a “distinction between color²⁸ (of which there are many, obviously)—and race--of which there are, according to most of my informants, only two---black and white.” (Sheriff 2001:45) According to these definitions when individuals are talking about 126 colors, they are doing so within a continuum of black and white.

Subtle Racism in Brazil

To what extent do the interviewees from UFBA identify the pervasiveness of racism in Brazil? This is very important to understand, because Salvador’s majority black population is historically excluded from many places dominated by whites (and one space in particular is the university). Many of my participants expressed that racism is not that “that bad.” It was not until I spent more time with various university students in their social environment that I began to see why race-talk is not a pending problem.

Some of the students invited me to their houses on a friendship-building basis. One student named Andre who identified as a middle-class and mestiço (he is half white and half black) invited me to a get-together with his classmates (most of them were students from UFBA’s Mechanical Engineer department). Before the party, I conducted an hour-long interview with the Andre where he expressed that he was middle-class. His middle-class definition turned out to be an understatement when I arrived to his mansion located on the hills of Salvador. Many students who also identified as middle-class also began to arrive in their luxury cars and discussed topics such as: their summer vacations

²⁸ Sheriff found that in many everyday contexts, color is used to describe rather than to classify one’s self and others. Moreover, what is being described is not a reified notion of race, but rather a necessarily imprecise perception of *cor*, or color (Sheriff, 2001:31).

in Europe, or the boat trips many planned to take the following day. After spending more time in their environment I realized that they did not experience economic exclusion or racial exclusion because they are Brazil's elite. Never having to question their own identity made them not have to question that of others, including black or indigenous. I began to understand that their disregard to the intensity of racism spoke more from the fact that they did not live within the reality of racial exclusion.

As I stated in the beginning of the chapter I am particularly interested in understanding if students would acknowledge their white privilege when discussing racial inequality in Brazil. Interestingly, we will see that whites remain invisible when discussing racism in white spaces, but we will see how they remain invisible in non-white spaces. The only place in which white privilege was critiqued (out of my three research sites) was in Cooperifa. I found that racism, to Cooperifa members, was the privilege that whites have stolen. In Capelinha and UFBA racism is directed towards blacks and indigenous. These two different opinions (UFBA and Cooperifa) interpret different meanings to racial categories, power, and history. In order to begin to understand this, I highlight my UFBA responses to the question: is there racism in Salvador and how would you describe how it happens? A Mechanical Engineer student who was finishing his first year at UFBA explained:

I do not think there is racism based on race, but on financial resistance
If a white person has money, they pay. If a black person has money, they
pay also....I think Bahia is the place in Brazil where less racism happens,

because of the black population is so high. (Mechanical Engineer student, July 9, 2008) ²⁹

Paola (the pharmacy student) thought that there was racism, yet believed that it is not very intense.

I think there is [racism]..but I think it is not too intense. Because people are more conscious... because there is more racial mixture...I don't think...well of course there is racism anywhere....But I don't think it arrives to something so insensitive. I never felt anything...well of course there are jokes...but I think they are all over the world. ...I don't think I have ever noticed racism (Paola, Pharmacy student July 09, 2008).³⁰

I also spoke to another Mechanical Engineering student named Marcos who also expressed that racism in Brazil was not that bad against blacks without mentioning whites in his argument:

Racism in Brazil is something that is prohibited [he had previously spoken extensively about Lei Caó, which was passed in 1989 criminalizing acts of racism]...Bahia, as a state...has a good interactions with blacks...it is a state that, even though it is poor, you interact with the Bahian ways [“jeitinho Bahiano]. People here are happy, even though there is so much poverty and social inequality. I think that in other areas, like Sao Paulo there is more racism...not here [in Bahia] (Marcos, Mechanical Engineer Student July 23, 2008). ³¹

²⁹ Acho que não existe racismo, mas existe exclusão financeira...Se o branco tiver dinheiro paga, se um negro tiver dinheiro paga...Acho que aqui em Bahia seria o lugar do Brasil onde existe menos racismo por causa do proporção do negro.

³⁰ Eu acho...mas não acho que seja muito intenso. Porque eu acho que as pessoas tenham consciência que ha uma mistura muito grande. Não acho..claro que tem em qualquer lugar. Mas não sei se chega ser uma coisa tão intensiva. Também nunca presenciei nada assim existe sempre umas piadas..mas acho que é mundial. Mas assim presencial uma sena de racismo eu nunca presenciei.

³¹ Racismo no Brasil é uma coisa proibida. Bahia, por ser um estado...com boa vivenda entre os negros..ela é um estado que, digamos assim, ser mais pobre né, você convive com o jeito Baiano. Por o gente ser feliz entre tanto desigualdade social. Mas, eu acho que em São Paulo não. São Paulo é uma cidade bastante racista... mas aqui não existe isso.

There are many ideas that Marcos engages with that should be dissected. The first one is that there is less racism in Bahia because of the high black population. There is a popular assumption made that because there is a higher black population that there will be less racism. Having more of a black or white population does not make race relations less racist. For instance, one author that describes just how perverse white privilege is in Salvador (the city that Marcos mentions has “less racism”) is Kisha-Khan Perry’s work on recent urban renewal project in Salvador, Bahia. Perry argues that the urban renewal (something that is viewed as a “positive” feature of city development) is a racist practice pushing out black clusters to make room for white renewed space (2004, 813). The questions becomes, how can so many people agree with Marcos’ viewpoint of racism. The idea of George Lipsitz’s definition that whites view their privileges as: “universal or neutral terms without any personal benefits or overt racist intentions” gains resonance here (Lipsitz in Shapiro, 2004: p13).

Conclusion:

This chapter studied how individuals at UFBA campus view race and race relations in Brazil. Even though the subjects are only part of a small segment of the Brazilian population, they represent a much larger and sophisticated discussion on why racial inequality in Brazil does not need to be visited. These interviews allowed me to understand how resistant the white privileged middle-class are towards addressing black inequality, but also how they do not equate their radicalized white privileges to black exclusion. My second and final chapter includes the voices of residents of Capelinha and

Cooperifa. From their interviews I draw a conceptual map on how individuals in different geographic spaces adopt each other's interpretation on race relations; and how other opinions on race rupture the current normalization of whiteness.

CHAPTER TWO:

CAPELINHA AND COOPERIFA

This chapter is divided into two sections and includes fieldwork conducted in São Paulo, Brazil on July-August 2009. The first section incorporates the stories of four residents from Capelinha, São Paulo. The second section incorporates four stories of participants from the Cooperifa movement. I asked both groups to explain how they arrived to São Paulo, their different experiences living in the periferia and how they interpret race and race relations. Both Capelinha and Cooperifa describe somewhat similar backgrounds, but they fared differently when it comes to talking about race relations. Capelinha residents did not emphasize that race plays a central role in their lives, nor influences Brazil's social structure. While, on the other hand many of the Cooperifa participants argued that race is a central factor in shaping their own lives, life in the periferia, and throughout Brazil. This chapter allows me to introduce similarities between the common discourses made by white middle-class in my previous chapter, with the non-white working class Brazilians in Capelinha. It is important to note that whiteness is hegemonic, so even though participants from the Cooperifa project are challenging it as a racial project, they are not able to distance themselves from the privileges of whiteness. Overall this chapter helps shed light towards understanding that there are consequences that exist when individuals subscribe to attitudes of whiteness; but also how Cooperifa participants challenge whiteness as an unnatural and artificial cultural construct.

RESIDENTS OF CAPELINHA SPEAK ABOUT RACE

A woman named Lidia and I began our conversation in front of her small nordestino store (a store that sells products from northern Brazil) in Capelinha. She sat on a wooden trunk that she used as a chair. She is a heavy-set woman and is in her early forties. She has dark-brown skin, naturally straight black hair, and she identified as morena. It was a sunny day and Lidia wore a purple t-shirt, denim shorts and broken-in Havaianas. Her store was located inches away from a busy street where: enormous buses, buzzing-cars, and high-pitched motorcycles race by fast enough to create small dust clouds. Catty-corner to her store was a small park with a group of mostly black kids crowded around a rope dangling from a tree. The oldest kid convinced the rest that it was his turn to swing and he began to cradle large tied knots at the end of the rope with his legs. His body almost poured into the street as he swung back-and-forth. Vehicles passed by him, causing alarm. Lidia stared at the kids and cringed her teeth, yet reassured me that kids had never been hurt by the swing and traffic. She continued to answer my questions stopping at times to look at the rumbling street, kids laughing, and also greeted her neighbors as they walked by.

Lidia explained that living in Capelinha had become increasingly difficult. She highlighted in particular the drug-trafficking violence, the constant fear of her husband becoming unemployed, and that public education might not prepare her kids enough for future jobs in Sao Paulo. She expressed that some of these problems (especially the violence) is something that has become more conspicuous throughout the years. She then clarified that these problems/violence has been ongoing no matter where she lived. She

remembered in particular her parents cashew farm located kilometers away from Fortaleza, Ceara back in the early seventies.³² She described the farm as enjoyable, yet things took a turn for the worse when the farm produced fewer cashews. Things got so difficult that she decided to leave with her husband for Fortaleza. Eventually, life in Fortaleza also became difficult and they both heard about São Paulo's job boom. With only a set of pots and pans in-hand, Lidia and her family boarded a bus in direction to São Paulo. Lidia's husband soon began working at various jobs, including a construction worker and a handy man. They eventually saved enough money to build a house and convert the bottom-story of their house into a convenience store. At the time of our interview Lidia worked at home operating her convenience store while taking care of her family.

Many Capelinha residents shared Lidia's experience of migrating to the periferia from northeaster states or rural towns throughout Brazil. Many of them expressed that they, or their parents, were struggling to make ends meet, and decided to make the move to São Paulo. This migration is related to the industrial and service industry boom that took place in the early eighties. This boom provided new jobs in Sao Paulo that were not available in other cities. Yet, northern movement to the south is not new, there has been a consistent migration from predominantly black states in north and northeast for many decades. When I asked Lidia who lived in the periferia and who makes these long journeys; it was evident that it is mostly a non-white reality.

³² Fortaleza is located over two thousand kilometers away from São Paulo.

It is important to highlight that the majority white-middle class UFBA participants in Salvador did not tell many stories about migrating or explained the difficulties of their neighborhood situation. It was not until I arrived to Capelinha that I began to see how jarring the economic disparities between both groups are. For example Ronaldo (the Mechanical Engineer UFBA student) explained that his family spent an equivalent to 43,000 U.S. dollars to fund his education. In the periferia Lidia's worries whether her children's public education³³ is sufficient enough to prepare them for a job, and does not mention the university at all. Lidia told me that her oldest daughter was already twenty-one and was working full time. Lidia explained that her daughter never mentioned going to the university. Lidia added that even if her daughter wanted to go to the university; she would not know how to help her considering she only had two years of formal education. On the other hand, many UFBA students described that most of their youth was spent preparing them for top ranked universities with their parents support. All the UFBA student's parents had attended high school, and some were even professors at universities. Even with these drastically different outcomes I was surprised to see that so many non-white working class residents subscribed to attitudes that would like to neglect the role of race in the formation/maintenance of social order in Brazil.

As mentioned earlier, Lidia considered herself morena because she was not preta (black) or branca (white). She explained that some friends of hers were pretos (black) and had mentioned that they did not like their color. She said that there are a lot of negative comments about pretos and that is probably why they did not like their skin color. Lidia

³³ Recall that public education fares substantially from private education in accessing public universities.

explained that she made the effort to like her color, even after a traumatic experience with her father. Her dad (who was white and had blue eyes) never recognized her as his child and gave Lidia up for adoption because he wanted lighter children and because he believed Lidia was not his child (since she was born with dark skin). Lidia attributed her father's thoughts to racism. I asked her if she believed if racism could also be whites privileging from their skin color. Lidia expressed that Brazilians' are not use to thinking in that manner. I next asked her: Does racism affects whites the same as blacks in Brazil? She explained that both races are affected by racism equally:

I have seen how racist people are in my hometown in Ceara. Blacks do not like whites, and whites do not like blacks. Racism can come from blacks, from morenos, from whites...basically from all individuals. I heard a man saying very mean things about his white neighbors, where he said stupid white fu**. I consider this racism and I believe it goes both ways (Lidia August 23, 2009).³⁴

She expressed that everyone basically has the same opportunities in her neighborhood, and rejects the idea that race influences the opportunities. Lidia did not appear interested in discussing race relations beyond her experience with her father. I continued to ask her more questions on the topic of race and the conversation ended quickly. Also, I found that Lidia's explanation of race relationships were observations and not critiques. Both these expressions (not having anything to say about race and also non-critical observation)) reminded me of the UFBA interviews. The question becomes why would individuals who are non-white want to invest in these attitudes. The answer is

³⁴ Tem muitos lugares tem, [racismo]. Se não me engano em Ceara tem. O preto não gosta do branco, e o branco não gosta dos pretos. Racismo pode ser dos morenos, dos brancos...todos temos...Me lembro dum vezinho falo pra um branquinho seu porra. O racismo vem dos dois lados(Lidia August 23, 2009).

complex and I believe it is related to hegemony. In other words, what I refer to as “*racial attitudes*” is linked to something broader than individual personal opinions. I believe it is related to a system of negating the importance of race in order for white racial hegemony. I believe that Stuart Hall’s work on racial hegemony highlights what I am looking at in Capelinha:

...the most common, least understood features of ‘racism’: the subjugation of the victims of racism to the mystifications of the very racist ideologies that imprison and define them (Hall 1986: 24).

Hence, I argue that the opinions stated in the periferia are speaking from the opinion of white Brazilians, yet they also invest in whiteness that is excluding other blacks. Acknowledging this contradiction helps us understand that whiteness is present within the ideological constructions of race relations. In order grasp how individuals use these attitudes to explain social order, I next asked a woman named Yadira about her attitudes on Affirmative Action.

Yadira is forty-three and she identifies as *mista* (mixed race). She worked in a store selling home décor for local residents (such as small clay vases, pillows and some school materials). Yadira is small-framed and at the time of our interview she wore a black button shirt and jeans. She has caramel colored skin, and curly wavy hair, which occasionally covered her eyes. I would consider Yadira black by U.S. racial standards. The reason why she described herself as *mista* is because her mother is white and her father is black. Yadira was reluctant to describe her neighborhood was mostly one racial category and instead she considered her neighbor’s mostly *mistos* because they come from both white and black racial background.

I asked Yadira to explain how she arrived to her current neighborhood of Capelinha. She explained that before she was born her father and his three brothers (who were born in the state of Alagoas) began purchasing various plots of land throughout Brazil (in particular just outside of Rio de Janeiro and also in a small town in Registro, São Paulo). Yadira's father and mother settled in Registro's where they had a banana plantation and many employees. When Yadira was in her nine her father became indebted. In order to pay off his debts he began to sell his land and assets. Yadira's dad sold their land in Registro and her family moved to the periferia in São Paulo. Her father became a Pepsi truck driver and her mother remained a housewife. Yadira described that she experienced a drastic change in class in a matter of months. One moment she remembered servants and private education in Registro: the next moment she was living with her family in a one-bedroom house and attending public school in the periferia.

Yadira continued to narrate her drastic changes in Capelinha. When she first arrived to Capelinha at the age of nine her neighborhood was mostly dirt roads and forestland. She explained that her parents and three siblings moved around the neighborhood to find the cheapest house to rent. At the time I interviewed Yadira, she was forty-three years old and had a daughter who was attending a nearby public middle school. I proceeded to ask her questions that might allow her to address race relations and address racism in particular. I asked her questions about Affirmative Action policies based on race. Yadira's response reminded me of the response that I saw with the college students and professors in Salvador. She became very uncomfortable and expressed her adamant feelings about the new policies and stated:

Yadira: Look Lorena, there is a difference between how individuals interact on a daily level and the other is what is on television. Racism is something that exists.....Are you talking about the racism, which is determined by the color of skin, right?

Lorena: Yes

Yadira: Ok then. From what I see, *recent racism* is when you discriminate against your own skin color. I think recently blacks are against their own skin color. I never see Whites feeling uncomfortable (At least that is what I see with my own family). Sometimes my black relatives feel uncomfortable with what my white family members say. I think the government is taking that idea, and making it public. I think racism is just that, black people trying to differentiate themselves. If someone calls you white, is that racism? [she asks me]...I think racism is only inside people's heads who are pardo color [esta mais na cabeça das próprias pessoas de cor parda.] . In Brazil, if you go to the bank, go to the market, or go to the streets you will see mostly mixed race.³⁵

I continued to ask Yadira if she thought of a particular location when she mentioned the bank, the market or the street and she stated the periferia. I asked her to conceptually leave the periferia, and enter into middle-class spaces (such as various nearby neighborhoods that she considers middle-class, or even the university) and whether she believed that those spaces are predominately mixed “mistos.” She explained

³⁵ Yadira: Olha Lorena, o que a gente presta bem a atenção. É uma coisa de conviver com as pessoas, outra é de o que você ouça na televisão. Racismo é uma coisa que existe. Mas, você está falando de racismo em termos de pele., em termos de cor?

Lorena Martinez: Sim,

Yadira: Então, assim.. por o que eu vejo o racismo é por a própria cor. A própria cor negro. Não com o branco. O branco não se incomoda. Eu falo por minha própria família... e por exemplo não se incomodam minha família branca, só minha família negra se incomoda.

E por exemplo, eu não sei se é por causa do governo que vive grifando essa palavra de racismo. Cotas para negros. Eu acho que racismo é por ali, você diferenciar esse do negro. Se alguém chama de você de branca, isso é também racismo? Eu vejo mas por esse lado assim, minha família é mista não vemos isso.

Em termos de racismo eu acho que está mais na cabeça das próprias pessoas cor parda e o governo que vive grifando aquilo. Você vai no banco, no mercado, uma feira. Nós somos uma raça misturada.

that as classes become more elite, the whiter the skin color gets. I asked her why whites are elites and she responded, “because whites are such a small minority in Brazil that they are able to maintain the top education and jobs.” I then asked her how they are able to maintain their elite status, and she remarked: because they remain educated and have money.

I redirected Yadira to her previous comment about her black relatives feeling uncomfortable at times with her white relatives, and asked her to explain further about this issue. She explained that sometimes the white relatives said jokes, or comments about blacks that might be considered offensive. I asked her if she thought that would be a reason to feel uncomfortable. She said yes, but that they do not say the jokes to be mean, but instead to make people laugh. Yadira explained that they all get along as long as jokes or comments made about blacks are not mentioned. I link this comment back to UFBA participants, because when I asked them to describe racism; all my participants explained that racism is against blacks and indigenous. I found that they rarely brought up the role of whites in their analysis. Lastly, Yadira explained that because Brazilians are “mixed race” (nos somos uma raca mista) so race cannot be used in Affirmative Action policy because it makes things more complicated. Instead she explains that Affirmative Action is a media gimmick that makes Brazilians separate themselves from one another, instead of seeing the truth that Brazil is full of mixed races [Brasil e uma raça de mistos].

Next, a man by the name of Nicolas agreed to partake in the interview. I met Nicolas in the streets of Capelinha. He spent his afternoons talking to his friends at a

nearby store. Nicolas is thirty-seven years old and has lived in Capelinha since he was five years old. He explained that his father is misto and his mother is preta. Nicolas racially identifies as pardo-branco, and when I asked why, he asserted that his birth certificate had that race. I asked him to explain this further, and he said that he is branco (white) because of his skin color yet pardo (black) because of his facial features. He continued to highlight that he does not like to talk about race. Instead he explains that he judges each person by their personality and not the color of their skin. He claims that personality transcends race. I questioned if he believed that there is racism in Brazil and he quickly mentioned that his mother did not like when he had black girlfriends when he was growing up. He believes that even though his mother was black, she did not like him having black girlfriends. He gives account of his mother saying very negative comments to make them break up. Nicolas stated that he thought this was racism because he didn't remember his mother treating his girlfriends with light skin the same way.

When I tried to address the current policies of Affirmative Action, Nicolas explained that there are more important topics to discuss than race. He explained that there has been a recent wave of violence that has defined life in the periferia. He remarks that this is more important to talk about. When I asked him why he felt this way, he said that most of the individuals living in the periferia would not attend the university so it is not such a big topic. Instead he explained that violence is a big topic because they lived it daily. In order to highlight the recent explosion of violence, Nicolas explained that when he first arrived to the periferia people would walk around at night without being scared of

being robbed. Today, he says now it is different and that actually he has been robbed a couple of times causing him to not go out at night.

When I redirected Nicolas to the topic of Affirmative Action he said that he does not agree with the policies because everyone is equal in Brazil. He explained that there were never restrictions against blacks in Brazil and because of this, the government should not use race to discriminate against people. Nicolas explained that even though he admits that the spaces of economic privilege, such as the *centro empresarial* (business center in Brazil) are majority white and the periferia is mostly black; he does not believe it is because of racism in Brazil. Instead he explained that it is your initial class that determines if you will move up or not. He explained that because blacks are living in poor spaces [lugares pobres], it is hard for them to leave poverty. He contrasts that whites live in spaces where it is easier to become rich and that is the reason for the difference between black and whites in terms of economic opportunities. He informed me that he heard that time will make the periferia better off economically. Lastly, Nicolas explained that Affirmative Action would not address racism, because Brazilian society on its own is becoming less racist. He recalled a club twenty years ago called Costa Azul that did not permit non-White patrons. He said that he has not heard of such a place in the past twenty years, which means that there is less racism now than before.

In addition, a man by the name of Danilo³⁶ also participated in my interviews. At the time of the interview he was renting a small shop where he sold purses and mended clothing for nearby neighbors. He racially identified as black. He is in his late thirties and

³⁶ Danilo is the same man who was discussed in the introduction section. This section will incorporate more of his interview.

has was born in Teixeira de Freitas, Bahia (which is a small town of around 125,000 people) located in southern Bahia. He arrived to São Paulo alone when he was very young. He explained that his childhood memories are not the best because his family was very poor and were not able to purchase the things that were needed (nos passamos por muita necessidade). At the age of ten, he started to study but unfortunately had to drop out of school in order to work. He explained:

Brazil, is a country that unfortunately requires us to work. It was not until now that I placed my feet on the ground, slowly...because there are a lot of difficulties.³⁷

I asked him what are those things and he stated “in these neighborhoods there are a lot of drugs, alcoholism and prostitution, which makes opening up a shop in those neighborhoods hard” (Danilo, August 24, 2010). Danilo expressed a very different social environment than the UFBA participants. Unlike the UFBA students who expressed a symbolic fear of daily violence; Danilo mentioned a proximity to the violence.

I told Danilo that I was interested in his opinion about racism. He explained that he was not racist and has never discriminated against anyone. He explained that Brazil is a free country where everyone is able to choose what he or she wants, independent of race. I asked him if he believed there was racism inside the neighborhood, he responded that there was not such a thing because everyone was too busy trying to get ahead and there was no time to see what the next person was doing just because of his or her skin color. He discusses everyone is a worker, independent of race. He nearly screamed in a

³⁷ O Brasil, ele e um pais mas infelizmente nos prende ao serviço. Ate agora eu pude prender meus pés no chão devagar por que teve vários dificuldades.

loud voice, and remarked “the white race is almost extinct in Brazil” he continued to state that talking about race is just an excuse to start putting blame on race for what another race is going through. He instead believes that with hard work blacks do in the periferia will some day get out.

Danilo did not address Brazil’s racialized history throughout our interview. Instead he repeatedly argued that race relations are tranquil. I gathered from Danilo’s attitudes about race tells us that there are unaccounted consequences that remain unspoken in the reach of white supremacy into the periferia of Sao Paulo.

CONCLUSION TO CAPELINHA:

Social inequality based on race exists throughout Brazil and throughout the Americas. There are diverse paths that consistently leave blacks and indigenous in a very distant position from the white norm. Even after accounting for these distances, whiteness is so hegemonic that it allows individuals to make gains (such as accessing the university) by ensuring that some kind of exclusion continues (and this is racial). The four interviews with Lidia, Yadira, Nocolas, and Danilo allowed us to understand the extent to which race is evaded when discussing the topics of: spacial segregation, wealth gaps, educational attainment, and employment opportunities. Instead they align with the white middle class by emphasizing that there is no need to visit race as a topic of discussion. There appears to be a passive perception that gains will be attained if the middle-class white ideas are adopted. Next, we will visit how Cooperifa members challenge the popular hegemonic notions of whiteness.

COOPERIFA PARTICIPANTS SPEAK ABOUT RACE

During the same time I was conducting interviews with residents of Capelinha I went to Cooperifa on Wednesday nights to attend the spoken word reunions. Within the first couple of minutes, after hearing various members speak, I learned to which extent individuals addressed race and class as a social phenomenon to change in Brazil. I attended the meetings for one month, and I soon started to approach individuals for interviews. The first person who agreed to an interview from the Cooperifa movement was a man named Edson. Edson is in his early thirties had medium brown skin, dark brown eyes and thick eyebrows. His mid-back length dreads were pulled back when I first met him, but he usually wore them down. He identified as black and has been an active participant of Cooperifa for the past couple of years. The first night we met he was wearing denim-jeans, a long black windbreaker and off-white t-shirt. When I approached Edson to request a more in depth interview he accepted right away, yet requested that we meet at his mechanic shop in Capão Redondo. I agreed to go that following Sunday morning.

Edson's shop was not immediately visible from the main street. After asking for directions, my roommate and I arrived to a pebbly pathway that eventually led to his shop. Upon walking into the garage an enormous Rottweiler made his presence known. Even with a heavy metal collar restricting the Rottweiler to a metal post, the dog was intimidating. One of Edson's employees heard the commotion and walked towards me asking if I needed assistance. I told him that I had arrived to see Edson and was told wait a couple of minutes because he was on the telephone. I could see him inside a small

office window located in the back wall of his shop. After he was done with the phone call, he signaled me to enter. He showed me a various poems that would soon be in a book he was publishing in a matter of months. We then proceeded to walk through his shop and he showed me various iron animals made out of recycled car parts. He said that he had made them for an art exhibit that took place at Cooperifa earlier that year. After showing me the poems, artwork, and shop we arrived to the driveway (not too far from the loud shops noises and the stares of the Rottweiler). We began the interview under the dim sun that eventually turned hotter as the interview progressed.

Edson's political stance about white privilege in Brazil was immediately exposed. He expressed in detail how whites have favored whites in Brazil and how this has happened throughout history. He explained that the history of Brazil started with a violent takeover and the killing of hundreds of thousands of natives, and also with the enslavement of millions of blacks, leading to an automatic privilege of white Brazilians. Since the onset of colonization, the violence against blacks and indigenous continues in various ways. For him there is direct killing (through the disregard for black life in the periferia); and other times it occurs when blacks/indigenous are forced to participate in what he considers the white middle-class project. The reason he believes that there is a white project because there is evidence of who is winning, which is the white middle-class. He states: "They have more resources, power, food on their plate and better education." White privilege is the reason why blacks are impoverished in Brazil, argued Edson. I asked him to explain how so:

There are many ways in which whites are privileged. For example, we can talk about aesthetics, what defines beauty is blond hair and light colored

eyes. On the other hand there are other parts to white privilege. Blacks do not have power, resources in society. Blacks are poor and they are seen negatively as poor people. When kids are young people ask them... what do you want to be when you are older. That person that is from the slaves quarter or Cinderella? Rich whites are valued; they have power, they are the rich, as if he [whites] are made of gold. There are blacks that escape, but the majority of blacks are in the periferia..and disorganized. The blacks that are next to whites are eating and drinking, when the majority of blacks are starving in the periferia.(Edson, August 26, 2009).³⁸

Every part of Edson's interpretation of social order are linked to race and class. Edson highlights that whites have symbolic and material benefits that are stripped from blacks. He argues that blacks do not have power because of this historic relationship. What Edson describes is something that is not present in Capelinha nor in UFBA. What this tells us is that whiteness as racial attitudes are accepted in certain spaces of Brazil, but not all.

Edson talks about race and class intersecting. He states that capitalism (as a white middle class project) requires participation of the masses (black, brown and white alike) in order to continue the machine of capitalism. This machine is powered by a white middle-class at the top, who determine who will receive resources and who will not. For Edson, material resources are not the only things that are shaped by the white middle-class project. He began to address how all this competition (based on race) affects individuals psychologically. He addresses it as if it was a mental attack against blacks

³⁸ O branco e privilegiado. Um exemplo ainda existe e, o tipo de beleza e olho clara, cabelo loiro, e isso ai e a parte estética. Porem tem outra parte. O negro não tem poder, bens, do social mesmo. O negro e pobre e mal visto pobre. Agora, existe, a criança nascem, as pessoas perguntam "Quem você quer ser de grande? Aquele da senzalas o cirindelezinha? O rico e valorizado quem tem o poder, o rico, o rico e valorizado como se ele fosse, esqueleto de ouro. . .Esse negro que se vendeu. Tem uma massa em maioria que eles estão desorganizada. E o negro, que esta ao lado do branco, esta comendo esta bebendo. Agora a grande maioria dos negros...agora esse homem morre.

especially. He explained that the psychological project requires blacks and indigenous people alike to participate in the middle-class capitalistic project that pretty much is a race war; but people are not suppose to regard it as such. One place that he argues that this begins is in the Brazilian educational system. He explained that this system trains all races (blacks, indigenous and whites) to compete against one another when there is no speaking of how whites win more consistently in the capitalistic machine.

As I was conducting the interview with Edson I began to see how participants from Capelinha and Cooperifa differed substantially in their definition of white privilege let alone in their stands against it. I recalled in particular many of the statements of the Capelinha participants in regards to not believing that whites are privileged over those who are non-white. I contrasted this to how Edson challenged the material and ideological construction of white supremacy. I brought this difference to Edson's attention and asked him why there is such a big difference between his opinion and the opinions of those I interviewed in Capelinha. He stated:

A lot of the people who live in the periferia are living day-to-day in search of immediate necessities. A lot of the time they are looking for just enough work to earn money to eat. With those immediate necessities its not so easy to see whites earning billions. Whites prefer for the migrants to close their eyes. (Edson, August 26, 2009).³⁹

Edson appeared to be engaging with an elaborated critique of both class and race in Brazil, and as our discussion continued he linked racism and classism in shaping

³⁹ Esses pessoas vivem dessa questão imediato...se eu tiver minha barriga hoje, cheio, de combustível dai eles podem ir atrais amanha. Com essas necessidades não da pra ver o branco empresário ganhando milhões. Os brancos preferiam os migrantes fecharem os olhos” (Edson, August 26, 2009)

spacial segregation. He stated that the periferia is a difficult place (something that none of my UFBA residents ever discussed) because resources are very scarce. Instead he describes the periferia as a forest of concrete. He asks me “How is one supposed to hunt when there is only concrete?” The concrete that Edson describes is a symbolic representation of the difficulties of attaining resources in the periferia. Earlier in the interview he addressed how hard it is for individuals to even eat food by earning minimum wage (or even less) in Brazil. Edson attributes this lack of resources (and also living in the concrete forest “floresta de concreto”) to both the capitalistic system and to whites that run the project. He stated:

You can't take from one [blacks] and give it to the other [whites]. And the reason is because he is more “beautiful” than the others. Whites have more than they need. They have furniture, many mansions, they are in cars that cost two million Real's. They have houses in the beach, meanwhile half of Brazil is working for them, working like a slave for them, and just earning enough money to be starving (Edson August 26, 2009).⁴⁰

Interestingly when I ask Edson if he believed the change should occur based on race or class, he described that change should be universal. He addressed that the poor in the periferia, even though in majority black, are also white, brown and mulatos. Further, that his family is multi-racial, as well as most of Brazil. Because of this fact, he would not like if one family member were chosen over another. Instead he argues that all people in Brazil need dignity and this will only happen if capitalism is challenged in a universal

⁴⁰ Ai assim eu não pode pegar para um e dar mais para outro. Ai, eu não pode favorecer o branco mais do outro, que ele e mais bonitinho que os outros. Os brancos tem muito mais do que precisam. Eles tem muitas moveis, muitas mansões, andam em carro de 2 milhões de reais, casa nas praias, todo o pais passeando. Tem meio mundo de escravos trabalhando para eles, nas empresas ganhando salário de fome” (Edson, August 26, 2010).

way and one way to do that is by providing all individuals a living wage instead of a salary only large enough to make individuals less hungry for a short amount of time. What he proposed was a more cooperative system that divided resources equally, something that happened in Palmares. He stated that if the Palmares model had not been destroyed, whites would not have all the resources today because capitalism would not benefit whites only. Edson described that blacks would not be excluded to the point that they are now and there would not be massive social inequality.

It is important to highlight that Edson was at times challenging the traditional class argument in Brazil, and other times he accepted it. Brazilian academic and popular discourse tends to emphasize the role that class has in structuring social inequalities independent to race (this was a common argument made by UFBA students/professors). Throughout the 1960's until today most Brazilian academics who address racial inequality continue to use a class lens.⁴¹ Even outside of the academy individuals who engage with inequalities usually use a class discourse before they use a racial discourse.⁴² The larger implication of *only* analyzing class inequalities *without* also accounting for racial differences is that a large portion of knowledge (experiences and *barriers*) that exists between whites and blacks will continue to remain unaccounted for. Not articulating this struggle means that white privilege will remain unchallenged and

⁴¹ For more information on this reference chapter one in Antonio Sergio Guimarães chapter titled “Classes Sociais in Classes, Raças e Democracia” in *Classes, Raças e Democracia* (2002).

⁴² Edson addresses that *class and race* are important phenomenon to understand. I would also like to add that there are also other formations that need to be addressed. Such as: gender, sexuality etc. For more information on this reference Carone & Bento analysis on unions in Brazil in (2007).

continue to dominate social relations without accounting for how it leads to racial inequality.

The next individual that I interviewed was Vinícius. Vinícius had also been a member of Cooperifa for the past couple of years also and grew up in Capão Redondo. Vinícius had light brown skin, brown eyes, and dark eyebrows. He also had dreads that were waist-length. I met him the second night I went to the Cooperifa movement. I asked Vinícius for the interview and he also agreed to meet me during the daytime at a clothing store that is owned by members of Cooperifa located in Capão Redondo. I met him in the shop and from there we walked across the street to a tattoo parlor owned by one of his friends. I met several of his friends and we went to the second floor where he showed me a tattoo parlor room. In another room was a bookshelf with many cd covers of rap artists and also books about black consciousness in the U.S. and Brazil. Vinícius also showed me some newspapers and magazines with interviews that various members of Cooperifa had conducted over the past couple of years. When we began our interview Vinícius appeared very comfortable talking about race relations in Brazil. We spoke for around one hour nonstop. I asked him how he identifies racially he stated black. He said that many members of the black movement consider him socially white and even though they do, he politically aligns with black identity. He was born in Capão Redondo and was adopted by a man who had fourteen children, who were all black. He recalls being the lightest boy of the fourteen children and this impacted him throughout his life. He explained that he continued to have long conversations with many of his brothers and they explain to him the difficulties of maneuvering through a white dominated society.

I asked Vinícius if he had conversations about racism before attending the Cooperifa movement. He immediately responded that he spoke about racism with his brothers growing up. In particular, he described the story of one of his brothers, who wanted to be a journalist (which is a white dominated profession). His brother described to him the competition that he had against his white colleagues. He described that his colleagues would continuously exclude his brother. He told me that his brother told him that blacks who are poor have to work twice as hard in order to attain the same professions that whites find easy to access. He stated that all the stories he heard impacted his visions that he had of both himself and also of white Brazilians. Vinicius described that he understood that in certain areas he is viewed as non-black. For example, he stated when he goes to a job interviews that he would not be outside of the required racial parameters. He also stated that if he were to specify that he is from Capão Redondo, it will be difficult to get hired. What this suggests is that race defines not only people's personal experience, but also how space in Brazil is racialized. He also recognizes that if the police arrive to Capão Redondo, most likely he will not be detained because of his skin color. The individuals in the periferia are heavily marked by race. He continues to say that if he is to approach some bars in the neighborhood, the people at the door might double think about letting him in because of his light skin color. He adds that his Rastafarian hair persuades them otherwise. I gather that space in Brazil is highly racialized within the periferia as well. In regards to racial formation theory there are times that blacks cash in on privileges of racialized power inside the periferia, which whites cannot cash in on.

Next I asked Vinicius to define racism, and he describes that it as the advantages that whites have compared to blacks/indigenous in jobs and in life in general. When I asked Vinicius to describe what is the difference between the whites in the periferia and the middle-class whites in Brazil he states:

whites in the periferia are sometimes racist, because they wants to be and because of the cultural advantages...and if we look at a white person with money..with schooling, he also can be racist. He has information and that information can be dangerous (Vinicius August 27, 2010).⁴³

I believe that Vinicius is addressing the symbolic power that whites have independent of being middle or lower class (in the periferia). He highlights that the white middle-class who is educated continues to gain tools that allows them to advance; while disregarding how race (something that Vinicius highlights as an important phenomenon throughout Brazil) influences advancement. I later brought up to Vinicius that one participant in Capelinha had told me that he would prefer not to talk about race because he felt that it does not change anything, and just reminded people about how racist Brazil is. He remarked that a lot of times schools teach blacks that there is nothing positive that they have contributed to challenge whites and this might be the reason why he does not want to discuss race. Currently, blacks are taught that they historically lost many battles against the white establishment. Instead, he stated, Cooperifa is about empowering people so that they do not have to avoid topics that hurt. He added that talking about racial inequality has become more common in various spaces, such as rap, hip-hop and also by

⁴³ Aqui o branco as vezes e racista. Porque ele quer e porque e questão cultural. E agora uma cara com grana..tem escola, estudo ele pode ser racista. Ele tem informação e a pessoas informada e perigosa (Vinicius, August 27, 2009).

learning about the rebellions like the battle of Menes, Xignapa and others, give blacks about a sense of pride about their history.

I also met a young woman named Elis. I approached her upon my last days at the Cooperifa movement. She was a newer member of the Cooperifa movement and lived in Jardim Sao Joaquim, located in a nearby district of São Paulo called Jardim Angela. She was born in São Paulo, and both of her parents were from the northeast. Her name was Elis and she was twenty-four years old and she racially identified as black. She had medium brown skin, black straight hair. She was medium height and skinny. Elis explained that her parents migrated to São Paulo thinking that life would be better, but she explained, only to find different types of problems. In one side her family life bettered because there was more work, yet on the other side it did not because life in São Paulo is very stressful. I asked Elis to describe her education background. She told me that she had received a degree in fashion and was now trying to enter into a journalism program at USP. She said things are very difficult and that she was preparing for the vestibular test all over again. I asked Elis to describe to me how she defined racism in Brazil and she explained that racism is the many thoughts that exist against blacks. She explained that many blacks are embarrassed about who they are, because of their skin color. For example, she referred to a niece that did not want to be black and denies that she was black. She said that there is also racism against whites in the periferia because there are more blacks and they might say something negative against whites. I asked her if racism is equal (since the way she was describing it appeared that there are different

examples where whites are racist and blacks are as well). Elis described that she believes that racism is not equal, that the process of racism has hurt blacks more.

CONCLUSION TO COOPERIFA

This chapter has allowed us to understand the extent in which attitudes describing race non-white periferia participants have adopted these notions about race. What this teaches us is that power is not coercive, but actually is adopted through ideas and gestures of knowledge in order to help reproduce whiteness. There are many groups throughout Brazil that are challenging various modern notions of whiteness as they are being reproduced either in the periferia. This thesis has allowed us to understand the extent in which ideas are adopted by various class and racial groups; but equally, how they can be challenged by understanding that whiteness' rewards are not always for all.

Appendix A: Questionnaire for UFBA Students and Professors

- 1) How long have you lived in Salvador? _
- 2) Do you attend public or private school?
- 3) How long have you studied in your University?
- 4) What degree will you graduate with?
- 5) What type of job will you be seeking after you graduate?
- 6) What income class would you place yourself in?
- 7) Has the University helped you with any expenses? Around how much percent?
- 8) How do you identify yourself racially? Could you explain why?
- 9) Who is able to access higher education in Salvador? Is there a difference for who is able to access Private universities? Public universities?
- 10) What type of education preparation was necessary in order for you to study at the university in Salvador?
- 11) In Salvador, why do think people pursue a university education? For example, why did you decide to study at the university level?
- 12) What is your opinion on the implementation of Affirmative Action in Higher Education based on the inclusion of African descendants?
- 13) Why do you think Affirmative Action started in Salvador? What makes Salvador's Affirmative Action different/same from the reasons of why Affirmative Action is implemented in other areas; say Sao Paulo?
- 14) Can you list some of the reasons people support Affirmative Action? Why some people are against Affirmative Action? Why do you think that people who are against/for Affirmative Action are incorrect?
- 15) Where do you find information about Affirmative Action?

- 16) Do you think that education is linked to personal economic advancement?
Community advancement (for example the advancement of Afro-descendants as a group?)
- 17) Do you think that Affirmative Action will change the distribution of wealth based on race in Salvador?
- 18) Do you think there is racial discrimination in Salvador? Can you give me an example?
- 19) What needs to be done to eliminate racism ?
- 20) How is race constructed in Brazil? How does this influence your opinion on Affirmative Action?
- 21) Is Brazil implementing the correct model for Affirmative Action?

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Capelinha residents and Cooperifa participants

1. How do you define yourself in terms of color/race?
2. Can you mention some colors/race classifications that you know of? Is there times that you use them/don't use them?
3. Do you think those classifications (mentioned in #2) are related in any way to class or education?
4. Do you think there are certain colors/races that are more valorized than others? How so?
5. Who is the racial category white? Can you determine a mestiço from a white?
6. Do you think there is racism in Brazil? Are there places it is more evident? How does it usually happen?
 - a. If yes above, do you think there are certain individuals that suffer more racism? Does that include individuals considered whites?
 - b. Do you know anyone who is uncomfortable when talking about race or color? Why do you think it is uncomfortable for them?
7. In your opinion what are some of the biggest problems facing Brazil? Does race play any part in determining the problem?

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