

# THINKING BRAZIL

UPDATE NO. 3 - AUGUST 2002

A Newsletter of BRAZIL @ THE WILSON CENTER

## Race Relations in Brazil and The US *Diversity in Perspectives*

This summer, *Brazil @ The Wilson Center* is pleased to host three Brazilian scholars who have been selected to participate in a program sponsored by the Brazilian Ministry of Culture and the Wilson Center: Over the next few months, Diva Moreira, Rosana Heringer, and Paulo Menezes will be researching various aspects of the racial comparisons between Brazil and the United States while in residence at the Wilson Center. *Diva Moreira* is a well-known activist with an impressive record of participation in Afro-Brazilian social movements since the 1970s. Her focus has been on race issues in Brazilian society as well as affirmative action and quota policies for Afro-Brazilians. *Rosana Heringer* is Director of the Center for Afro-Brazilian Studies at the University Candido Mendes (Rio de Janeiro) and intends to analyze the experiences and results of affirmative action and diversity programs that were adopted by United States government agencies as well as private organizations. *Paulo*

*Menezes* is a lawyer from São Paulo and author of the book *Ação Afirmativa no Direito Americano*. He is interested in analyzing affirmative action practices under U.S. law and assessing how similar policies could contribute towards the construction of a legal framework for affirmative action in Brazil.

Thanks to this extraordinary initiative on the part of the Brazilian Ministry of Culture, we have launched an examination of racial issues in the U.S. and Brazil originating from three unique and worthwhile perspectives: activist, practitioner, and legal expert. A forthcoming Working Paper will present the results of this research and their perspectives will converge at an August seminar hosted by *Brazil @ The Wilson Center*. In addition to the our resident scholars, we will invite additional experts to compare American and Brazilian racial realities and reflect on the manner in which this information might contribute to future decision- and policy-making for both countries.

### ROSANA HERINGER

#### *"The Challenge of Practice: Affirmative Action and Diversity Programs in Brazil and the U.S."*

The public debate about affirmative action and diversity programs in Brazil was intensified during Brazil's preparations for the World Conference Against Racism. In the months following this conference, federal as well as state government agencies publicly launched programs specifically addressed to Brazilians of African descent.

The current movement has been marked by rapid transformations while, at the same time, some new perplexities for race issues in Brazil. The importance of these recently proposed

measures is undeniable because they have stimulated a debate about a subject that has never been addressed directly by Brazilian society. The current concern is centered on the possibility of matching the urgency to adopt specific policies that will benefit Afro-Brazilians, with the need for these measures to be implemented after a broad public debate.

The main objectives of Dr. Heringer's research are: 1) to analyze the experiences of affir-

mative action and diversity programs adopted by public agencies and the private sector in the United States, in terms of their impact on promoting opportunities for specific groups, as



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well as the political consequences of these measures; and 2) to compile a “menu” of successful diversity and affirmative action programs (i.e. “best practices”) that could be used to form a list of policy recommendations for the private and public sectors in Brazil. As a product of this research, she expects to incorporate a systematization of the programs analyzed as well as an evaluation and discussion about the possibility of their application in Brazil.

**PAULO LUCENA DE MENEZES**

*“Affirmative Action: The U.S. Model As a Paradigm for the Brazilian Experience - A Comparative Study.”*



Dr. Menezes plans to conduct a study of the evolution of affirmative action practices under U.S. law, to demonstrate how this important experience can offer guidelines and a point of reference for Brazilian authorities. In spite of the existing differences in legal terms between both countries, the U.S. can serve as a model for the use and design of affirmative action programs as a form of public policy in Brazil.

Presently, this issue has an undeniable importance, because the implementation of officially-sponsored affirmative action policies in Brazil will form part of an irreversible process that already has begun. For example, some of the provisions included in the second version of the National Humans Rights Program and the Presidential Decree n. 4.228/02, both recently issued, have incorporated aspects to redress racial issues in Brazil.

According to Paulo, the opportunity to study this topic at a renowned center like the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, strategically located in Washington, DC where the Supreme Court and most of the federal agencies and offices are located, offers a unique possibility to achieve serious results for his research project.

**DIVA MOREIRA**

*“The State and Affirmative Action Policies: Differences and Similarities Between Brazil and the U.S.”*



The issue of addressing race inequality in Brazil by researching U.S. public policies, should provide feedback on the American experience of affirmative action programs. The starting point for Dr. Moreira’s project is the significant role of the Brazilian state in excluding Afro-Brazilians from the labor market and the inner-cities through strategies of racial and social exclusion, following the abolition of slavery in the country. As a consequence, she believes it should principally be the state’s responsibility to help these citizens overcome the circumstances of poverty and second-class citizenship that the majority face in Brazil.

In addition to completing bibliographical research, a series of interviews with prominent Afro-Brazilian activists will be conducted. The objective is to speak with them on their opinions about recent race-based initiatives in Brazil, as a result of the Durban conference last year. She is also interviewing African-American scholars and activists to have their evaluation on the main consequences of affirmative action in the U.S.

Dr. Moreira’s time at the Wilson Center will allow her to better understand the question of blacks and whites, and their inter-relationship after so many years of formal integration in America. She is also concerned about the issue of social stratification within the African-American community in the U.S., and how it impacts the building of intra-racial solidarity. Although she stands for affirmative action, given Afro-Brazilians’ demographic reality (45% according to the 2000 Census) and the need for an approach that simultaneously addresses race and class in public policies, Dr. Moreira concludes that it may be a more successful strategy to create an integrated and democratic society in her country.



**Thinking Brazil** is a publication of **Brazil @ the Wilson Center**. This project is founded on the conviction that Brazil and the U.S.-Brazilian relationship deserve to receive better attention in Washington. Brazil’s population, size, and economy, as well as its unique position as a regional leader and global player fully justify this interest. In response, and in keeping with the Center’s mission to bridge scholarly research and public action, **Brazil @ the Wilson Center** sponsor activities designed to create a “presence” for Brazil in Washington that captures the attention of the policymaking community. **Brazil @ the Wilson Center** is grateful for the support of the Ministry of Culture of Brazil, ADM, Cargill, Chevron-Texaco, FMC, and GE Fund.

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