Boston Latin School

Tufts IGL Inquiry 2023

*A Conference on Global*

*Reparations for Slavery*

Brazil

Briefing Paper



**A. Introduction:**

The delegation of Brazil is pleased to participate in this year’s Inquiry: Conference on Global Reparations for slavery. We are hopeful that we may work together to combat the lasting effects of enslavement, an issue important to all Brazilians. We strive to support other countries to follow our example in the goals we have made for reparations. Our view of this conference is as a chance to establish a global initiative in regard to global reparations, in addition to formulating a suggested route individual nations may take within their own borders to mitigate the effects of this crisis. Brazil’s main objective beyond climate action is the preservation and betterment of the quality of life for our citizens, from taking increased security measures to developing our economy in a sustainable manner. Our goal is for sustainable growth in Brazil that does not damage the lives of our people, but that benefits them. As the issue of reparations has become increasingly in the public eye, we continue to recognize the severity of the problem, and seek to help others take decisive action towards a more equitable future.

**B. Identity**

As a vast federal republic, we, the Brazilian delegation, are representing approximately 218.7 million people. We are a diverse nation, with a little less than half of the population being of majority European descent (Portuguese, Italian, Duth, Spanish, ect.), a little more than forty percent being of a mixed background, nearly eight percent being of majority African descent, about one percent being of Asian background, and about zero-point-four percent being of Indigenous cultures, nations, and tribes. There is much diversity in the origins of our modern-day immigrants, with most coming from Europe and East Asia, as well as our fellow South American nations, all ever since the African slave trade was outlawed on May 13, 1888. Between the about sixty-five percent of the population which is Catholic and the twenty-two percent which is Protestant, nearly eighty percent of our country is Christian, and most other people are either non-religious or spiritist. More than half of Brazil is considered middle-class due to successful social problems, especially those of President Lula, but poverty and income inequality are still areas where improvement is ongoing, especially regarding northeast, north, center-west, female, black, mixed-race, and indigenous populations.

**C. Key Points:**

* We wish to keep reparations an intra-national topic while striving to encourage international recognition of the legacy of slavery.
* Brazil has taken many steps to recognize and return land to the descendents of former slaves and are committed to continuing this trend and working with Quilombo leaders.
* Successful social programs under the previous Lula administration, such as Bolsa Família, have led to less need for material reparations. We are proud of these steps forward.
* Brazil has set up programs to finance the education of descendents of slaves and are taking steps to decrease racial discrimination and bias.
* Brazil prioritizes education and has established affirmative action programs to ensure equal access for all our citizens. We have also taken steps to address the legacy of slavery, promote racial justice and honor Afro-Brazilian culture through civil society organizations.

**D. History with Slavery:**

Brazil’s past and present have been fundamentally shaped by our involvement in and the legacy of slavery. After Brazil was colonized in the 16th century, the Portuguese empire needed labor to fund their economic pursuits. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was established to fill this labor shortage at the expense of the millions of Africans who were kidnapped and shipped off to a new land. Brazil’s economy was soon centered around the slave trade and the labor enslaved people could provide, particularly in the agricultural sector that was the backbone of the economy. So many Africans were forcibly brought to Brazil that they soon outnumbered the Portuguese and indigenous people. Despite making up a large segment of the population, people of African descent were still treated as sub-human, and those who were held in slavery were traded like cattle and beaten into submission.

Upon declaring independence from Portugal in 1822, slavery was still legal in Brazil. Independence, however, brought about a greater movement for abolition. The slave trade was officially outlawed in 1831, but traders continued to illegally buy and sell Africans as slaves. As Brazilian elites began considering the direction in which they wanted the country to go, it became clear that slavery was a blight upon the future of Brazil and an economic pitfall. An increasing number of Afro-Brazilians were freed by those who had owned them, even before the institution of slavery was outlawed. Slavery persisted at the insistence of large agricultural elites who claimed their industry would flounder without forced labor. In 1871, the “Free-Womb Law” declared that children of the enslaved would be free. The *Lei Aurea,* or Golden Law, passed in 1888, abolished slavery in Brazil. This announcement was followed by a celebration by people from all classes and races.

The echoes of Brazilian history with slavery can still be felt in our modern nation. There are disparities within our society which are a direct effect of this history. We strive to create a better, more equal Brazil that can acknowledge its past while moving into a brighter future.

**E. Issues:**

1. **Committee on The Politics of Reparations**

The New Brazilian Constitution, published in 1988, was the first official Brazilian document to acknowledge the existence of quilombos, which are communities descended from slave populations. In addition to this, it also promised these communities a collective title for their land. In 2003, Decree 4887 established that Afro-descendent communities could also register for quilombo status and get collective land deeds of their own. Right wing parties denounced this decree in the following year, and in 2015, the Brazilian Supreme Court began to consider the issue. With the conservative swing of 2017 in Brazil, granting of land deeds to quilombos was halted until the Supreme Court made a decision. In February of 2018, the Supreme Court made the decision to uphold the constitutionality of Decree 4887, resuming reparations after approximately a year without activity.

We are primarily focused on giving reparations to the Afro-Brazilian citizens within our own country. Due to this, we are represented as both a victim country and an oppressor country, with the majority of the upper classes for all of Brazil’s history since colonization being European in origin, and the majority of the lower classes being of African, Indigenous, or mixed descent. We would certainly welcome foreign monetary support for intra-national reparations programs, but on the whole we wish to keep reparations a national, not international, issue.

The conservative parties of Brazil- particularly the Social Liberal Party which included the previous president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro- have long been against reparations in Brazil, and fought against them at every step of the way. In addition to the stalling of Decree 4887 mentioned above, conservative actors killed a total of fourteen quilombo inhabitants in conflicts over land between October of 2017 and 2018. More liberal parties, including the Workers’ Party which elected current Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, have been significantly more in support of reparations. Various liberal and Afro-Brazilian activists have pushed for the support of Decree 4887, and reparations show no sign of disappearing while Lula is in office.

Similarly to many other issues within Brazil, whether one is for or against reparations very much depends on one’s class and party. Most groups that advocate for reparations are made up of lower class citizens and people of color, thus making quilombos advocate groups, such as the National Coordination for the Articulation of Quilombos (CONAQ), and the Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU) standout examples. These groups have partnered long term with sympathetic political parties and our current President Lula to fight for the rights and land titles they believe are vitally important. On the other hand, allies of former President Bolsonaro and his Liberal Party are vehemently against reparations.

Both affirmative action programs and the aforementioned quilombos, pioneered by the Workers Party, are currently being supported by the Lula administration. All Afro-Brazilians living in predominantly Black villages may receive a land grant, our way to create a program of reparations. At the local level, aggressive land grabs and reluctant governmental agencies are two issues being dealt with urgently by the Lula administration. Brazil’s rural Black communities still face a number of obstacles to turn the agenda of reparations into a reality for all. We recognize these complex obstacles will be difficult to overcome, but Brazil is committed to succeeding against them as best as we are able. Ultimately, Brazil’s goal is to repay the debt held by the descendants of enslaved people that has accumulated over the past several centuries.

1. **Committee on The Legal Concerns of Reparations**

The diverse population of Brazil includes many people of African descent, many of whom are the descendents of slaves. The issue of reparations is primarily a conversation within Brazil, rather than being dictated by other nations. Our government seeks to find a solution to this historical disparity that will uplift all our citizens and pave the way for a new generation of Brazilians who can achieve their highest potential.

Our country has a history of progression in the legal groundwork that forms the basis for reparations today. Our Programa Brasil Quilombola established a precedent in 2004 under which the government returned land to Afro-indigenous populations. Under this program, the government of Brazil pays private owners for their lands in order to return it to descendents of slaves and indigenous people who have suffered from the lasting effects of slavery. There have also been instances where the courts of our nation rule on whether the government is liable and therefore should be held accountable for human rights abuses. Although this process has not applied to slavery, our courts have acted as a check on the government for other issues that affect our population, such as the military abuses of the earlier 20th century, and ensured that the Brazilian government accepts responsibility in these instances. Our Congress has the capacity to establish committees and commissions to investigate instances of human rights abuse. The Amnesty Commission has laid the groundwork for reparations being allocated to victims of other abuses. The Brazilian policy of affirmative action has been upheld by the supreme court as a constitutional and necessary form of reparations to bridge the opportunity gaps between races that are a remnant of slavery. Our nation has also officially apologized for our involvement in slavery as of 2005.

Some Brazilians have raised concerns that slavery is too far in the past and was too widespread for our government to feasibly distribute reparations. The precedent of a 120 day period to claim monetary reparations for other human rights abuses further exemplifies this point. More recently, however, that time period has been amended as too short. This leaves the door open to the discussion of how reparations may be claimed by those harmed by slavery. Decree 4887 established that any community that declared themselves to be of African descent could apply for the status of quilombo and receive a collective land deed. This watershed program effectively created a potential for reparations for allAfro-Brazilians living in predominantly black villages and urban neighborhoods. The constitutionality of this decree was challenged on the basis that it violated private property rights and that self-identification was an unreliable method of land reform. Our Supreme Court ruled that this decree was constitutional, however the concerns about self-identifying communities remain.

1. **Committee on Symbolic Reparations**

We believe that symbolic reparations are one of the most important ways in which we can attempt to recognize the mistreatment of millions of Africans brought to our country in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. These symbolic gestures are to keep awareness of the issues of our past, and ensure that future generations do not repeat these atrocities. We must invest in our future to make certain that Brazil can be both prosperous and continue to grow from the wrongdoings of our past.

These reparations are exemplified by President Lula's publicly apology in April 2005 in Goree Island, Senegal from the balcony in the Slave House, in which he said, “I want to tell you…that I had no responsibility for what happened in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries but I ask your forgiveness for what we did to black people.”

We believe that memory museums have the most impact. They help us remember the forgotten places in which slaves were kept and honor their memory. We believe that recognizing the history of a place and not pretending it didn't happen makes more of an impact than others.

In the past Brazil has taken many steps to apologize and memorialize the victims of slavery, including a cemetery for former slaves was found and turned into a museum called Pretos Novos Cemetery.

The Quilombo is a community of the descendents of escape slaves, called Quilombolas. We have provided around 220 Quilombos with land titles and are working to increase the efficacy of our Quilombo program. Community leaders, such as José Lazaro da Cruz, have spearheaded efforts to gain land rights and we have worked with these leaders through our Quilombo program. Quilombo groups apply through the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform and wait for certification and we are dedicated to working through these applications to provide Quilombo certification.

With our change in administration, Brazil is dedicated to making symbolic reparations and recognizing the darker pieces of our history. We are working with Quilombo leaders to honor their history and create a more equal national community.

1. **Committee on Financial and Material Reparations**

Brazil, when it was colonized by Portugal, brought over ~2.5 million slaves from Africa, thus began the struggle of slaves and their descendants in our nation. Approximately 60,000 indigenous people were enslaved in Brazil and although it is a fraction of what the African countries suffered through it is still notable. Furthermore, we acknowledge that these groups have been negatively affected even after slavery was abolished by racist policies. In an attempt to make up for this, we currently have a reparations program in place to give money to the descendants of slaves in the form of paying for their education. Despite it being a costly program, we are very much hopeful for it to continue. We also have a reparations program for those hurt by political violence.

In modern times there have been many examples of successful international reparations efforts. Two of the most notable reparations programs are that of Apartheid and the Holocaust. For Apartheid, the South African Government made a one time deposit of $3,900 to the approximately 16 thousand affected. This was a small fraction of those affected by Apartheid and with help from foreign governments this program could have been a greater success. After the Holocaust Germany paid 7 billion dollars to Israel but overtime that number has increased to roughly 89 billion dollars. These investments grew the economy, job opportunities and infrastructures of Israel for the time it was paid. Reparations for slavery could be the same thing for countries affected including Brazil and the African countries.

Experts state that, “Western countries willing to pay reparations could finance specific projects connected to the slave trade. They could donate funds to maintain and create African museums and historic sites to forever remember the tragedies that took place. They could also fund educational programmes to study the trans-Atlantic trade, or fund a truth commission on the slave trade.” This explains that money is not the only possible source for reparations and they can take the form of land or acknowledgments in the form of museums or monuments. The countries that we are looking for compensation from would be Portugal, Britain, and France. If the stated countries gave reparations we would be able to create housing, museums, and monuments for the descendants of slaves.

We have already taken several steps to decrease racial bias and disadvantages under our new president. As already stated, we currently have a reparations program in place. Our current President Lula has gone so far as to create branches of the government that are specifically responsible for the advancement of indigenous and African Brazilians. More laws to prevent bias and discrimination are being passed currently and already have. If these are put forward on a global scale, many countries and people’s lives would improve. The benefits of these changes are great in Brazil and can be in other countries around the world. Monuments would educate the people into the future about the tragedies of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. However monetary investments by countries that benefited from slavery, including Brazil, to those who were negatively affected is a step in the right direction.

The Brazilian Government is willing to contribute to a global fund to purchase housing, land for descendants of slaves. We should receive a large portion of such a fund as it had ¼ of all slaves who were brought to the Americas. The money put into the fund should be based on the economic benefit that each country received from slavery. This would make it so that mainly the European colonial powers and companies in some countries that exploited some would contribute the most and countries that had the most descendants affected by slavery would receive the most of the funds.

We, the Brazilian delegation, believe that although legal and symbolic gestures by countries are helpful for the world, monetary funds are necessary. Racism in the US and Brazil, and colonization in Africa put all of those affected by the colonial European nations behind and no matter how many gestures some countries make, these people will still not be able to move forward at the pace those who benefited from slavery would.

1. **Committee on Descendants and Population**

When it comes to reparations, we believe that symbolic reparations to the descendants of those impacted by African slavery in Brazil and in modern-day African nations are a non-negotiable and unquestionable must. Participation in such international events as the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in 2001 has demonstrated our commitment. However, when it comes to financial and material reparations, as will be discussed, Brazil has a complex and controversy-filled situation. In Brazil today, there are more than 3,000 quilombos- settlements founded by escaped enslaved Africans. Many of these communities are awaiting regularization by our government, and over 300 communities, and growing, have received it. Additionally, some groups are awaiting indemnity payments, but sharp falls in Brazil’s budget under former presidents have gotten in the way. The land rights of quilombos and other descendants are the future of Brazil’s material reparations plans, though we do hope to enlarge such plans when it becomes feasible. In addition, for the time being, structures such as Bolsa Família have also been effective at alleviating the strain on descendants financially.

Of the 12.5 million Africans enslaved and brought to the Western Hemisphere, over four million were ripped from their original homelands in Sub-Saharan Africa to be taken to what is now our nation of Brazil. These individuals were, as in the rest of the world, treated terribly cruelly, and viewed as property and as tools for the furtherance of the economic success of the landowners. Regrettably, myths that portray Brazilian enslavement as somehow less inhumane are false; those who purchased enslaved Africans worked them until they were quite literally emaciated, morbidly thin, and/or dead. While the Golden Law of 1888, also known as Imperial Law 3,353, did indeed emancipate all enslaved peoples in Brazil, due to a variety of factors it was not effective in propagating freedom and equity beyond that, as prior to the law’s establishment, the economy had already started to move on from slavery-based farming, resulting in very few places for emancipated enslaved people to go. Furthermore, while the Golden Law was uncompromising in its decree, its simplicity meant there was no social net or protections put in place via its establishment for the newly freed. Due to all of these factors and the remaining extreme racism among the descendants of the European colonizers, many of the formerly enslaved simply entered into agreements with the same people who previously governed their lives- food and shelter in exchange for work- leading to basically no change overall. Today, the ripple effects of slavery are still felt across the country. Despite previously stated figures proving that Afro-Brazilians make up at most about half of the population, they make up two-thirds of the incarcerated population and annual victims of violent crime, as well as about three-fourths of the poorest section of the societal spectrum. Due to the disadvantagement of freed slaves and their descendants, Afro-Brazilians have long struggled to move upwards in our society. One of the major legacies of slavery comes in the form of institutionalized discrimination, which is mostly appearance based, which has led to people of some or all African descent, especially those who look the part traditionally, to face lower wages overall than they deserve. This is an issue which is still undergoing much research, and, long term, we hope to treat the problem with such initiatives as the 2001 implementation of affirmative action in some universities.

As demonstrated by the most recent election, there is a major divide in our country over how progressive the government should be on these issues going forward. Former President Jair Bolsonaro is staunchly anti-reparations to essentially anyone, whereas current (and former) President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has demonstrated a commitment to lifting up the working class, which is majority mixed race and of-African-descent, through programs relating to higher salaries, reserved scholarships, and general labor rights. Given his record during his previous term as president, President Lula is expected to re-implement many of these policies, which were swept away under Bolsonaro. Outside of politics, debates over reparations are very partisan, and opinions are almost entirely based on class and perceived race lines. The middle and upper classes, which are predominantly of European descent and satisfied, are a lot less pro- Reparations in general compared to the lower and poorer working classes, which are vastly predominantly racially diverse and mixed. In addition, some local administrations are resistant to respecting the land rights of descendants, such as the rights of quilombolas, an issue that is certain to be addressed by the federal government in the future, as President Lula supports the recognition of quilombos.

Indigenous people of Brazil were subjected to slavery during the colonial era, especially in the 16th and 17th centuries. Indigenous people frequently endured cruel treatment and exploitation while being forced to work in mines, on plantations, or in other types of forced labor. This technique has had a tremendous negative influence on our nation’s indigenous people. Their forced labor was crucial in developing Brazil’s economy, particularly in the mining sector. However, the institution of slavery also had disastrous cultural impacts on tribes, resulting in the seizing of their ancestral lands, and the extinction of their languages and customs. Due to sickness, violence, and exploitation, many indigenous populations were entirely wiped out or majorly displaced. Many indigenous communities in Brazil are still subject to persistent violence, marginalization, and prejudice today, which is a legacy of the enslavement of indigenous people in that country. Land rights are a significant problem, as indigenous people fight to safeguard their ancestral lands from exploitation, development, and invasion by outside interests. Despite the largely negative situation, progress has been made in the 21st century, excepting, of course, the presidency of Jair Bolsonaro. We believe that with President Lula and his new (and first ever) Ministry of Indigenous Peoples, Brazil can make up for its history of injustices and protect lands going forwards.

Slavery was abolished in Brazil in 1888, and ever since then, we have established a number of programs to grant enslaved people’s descendants similar rights and opportunities. In actuality however, the effects of slavery are still felt in Brazil's social and economic systems, and racial inequality is still a major problem there. Slaves’ descendants are entitled to the same citizenship opportunities and legal protections as other Brazilian citizens, though they continue to experience marginalization and discrimination in a variety of societal settings, including those involving employment, education, and healthcare. Our government has developed affirmative action programs in colleges and universities and public employment to address these inequalities. These policies seek to expand access and opportunity for disadvantaged populations, including those descended from slaves. Brazil has made attempts to grant descendants of slaves equal rights and opportunities, but there is still a long way to go before there is true racial equality and fairness in the nation. We hope in the coming years, these problems will see increasing attention and solutions.

1. **Committee on Education and Awareness**

Following the abolition of slavery, Afro-Brazilians have faced significant challenges in terms of achieving social and economic equality. Racism and discrimination persist, with many formerly enslaved people and their descendants living in poverty and facing limited opportunities for education and advancement. In recent years, we have taken steps to address the legacy of slavery and to promote racial justice. We have established affirmative action programs to help increase access to education and employment opportunities for Afro-Brazilians. In addition, there has been a growing movement to acknowledge and celebrate Afro-Brazilian culture and history, including the annual Carnival celebration and the creation of museums and cultural centers dedicated to black history and culture.

Brazil educates its citizens about reparations through civil society organizations, which have been at the forefront of advocacy for reparations for Afro-Brazilians. These organizations conduct research, organize public events, and engage in advocacy to raise awareness about the need for reparations and to promote greater social and economic equality for Afro-Brazilians.

Education is one of the primary concerns of the Brazilian government. In Brazil education is compulsory, aiming at providing the necessary structure to the development of the students potential as an element of self fulfillment, training for work, and conscious exercise of citizenship. Additionally Brazilian education spending for 2019 was 15.96%, a 0.52% increase from 5 years prior which further exemplifies our commitment to education.

We have worked hard to establish affirmative action programs to help increase access to education opportunities for all Brazilians. Law 10,639/03 establishes requirements for what schools should teach students. It states that every school in Brazil must teach the history of Africa and its people, and the struggle that black people have faced in Brazil. It also encompasses the teachings of Afro-Brazilian culture, the contributions of black people in forming national society, which includes social, economic, and political areas relevant to the history of brazil. We are ecstatic to celebrate the 20th year of this legislation’s inception.

1. **Committee on Building the Future**

Slavery, tragically, is an institution that continues with us to this day. Not only does modern slavery persist across the globe, we are still feeling its legacy. Slavery still exists in the form of forced labor, debt servitude, and prison labor in many countries, including Brazil. Forced labor and debt servitude take advantage of low-income, poorly educated communities, often by luring people in with the promise of good work. Debt servitude is also a form of slavery, under which companies and even governments create what seem to be opportunities, but then saddle those people with insurmountable debt. Prison labor consists of forcing people who have been imprisoned to work for little to no pay. All these forms of modern slavery force people to work in awful conditions, not for their own benefit, but for that of their so-called employers. In order to address the past institutions of slavery, we must begin to tear down these institutions that have cropped up in its place.

Slavery has left so many lasting impacts on our world, it is difficult to boil them down to just three. For Brazil, the three most significant legacies of slavery are the persisting income inequalities, systemic racism, and educational divides. All these topics have ties to one another. Income inequality remains a huge barrier across the world for populations who are the descendants of slaves. Land, assets, and salaries remain lower on average for Afro-Brazilians than other populations in Brazil. We have taken great strides to remedy this legacy of slavery, particularly through our Programa Brasil Quilombola, but there is much more that must be done. Brazil’s history is, sadly, colored by the barriers that have been put up systemically to prevent excellence in the Afro-Brazilian community. It is vital that we begin to overcome the biases and explicit racism that perpetuate these ingrained obstacles. Only then may we start to create a more equal world. Education is the key to creating generational wealth, but it has often been blocked from descendants of slaves. We are working to institutionalize affirmative action programs that open educational pathways for marginalized communities. Education is also a way to teach the new generations about the mistakes of the past, so that they may learn from them. These persisting legacies of slavery is why reparations are so important, in any form possible.

Unfortunately, modern-day slavery does exist in Brazil. Private companies in the Amazon exploit citizens via debt slavery. We have taken great steps to try and eviscerate the existence of slavery in our nation, but it is a problem that we are continuing to combat. Modern-day slavery most victimizes young men living in rural areas. We have established the Institute of the Pact for Eradicating Slavery, which is intended to identify the root of slavery as it continues to exist in our society. Our Flying Squad is intended to investigate reports of slavery and help those victimized by this criminal activity. They have been highly successful in the cases that are reported, but it is still estimated that only 20% of cases are reported. Modern-day slavery still is a blight on Brazilian society, but we are doing our best to make it an institution of the past.

Accountability is crucial to eradicating slavery across the world. International institutions such as the Organization of American States aided Brazil in the initial steps we took to address slavery in our own society. Nations often act after international light is shed on the dark underbelly of the labor force. While sovereignty and the autonomy of states must be respected, there is also a role for the international community when human rights are being violated. The UN High Commission for Human Rights should also take on a larger role in the eradication of slavery. Brazil would be willing to participate actively in international bodies such as these whose goal is to eradicate slavery.