
A Study Trip to Brazil Shows an Unexplored Side of Bahia

Contributed by Stephanie Hedt
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Bahia Street, a nonprofit organization based in Salvador, Seattle, and London, will be hosting a ten day study trip in May to explore the race, class, poverty and society of Bahia, Brazil. This trip will take an inside look at Brazilian culture through the culture of the African-Brazilian majority in Northeast Brazil.

The study trip will be held from May 15-May 26, 2009 and will explore diverse areas of Bahia, including a small fishing village, an interior river town, a nature preserve within the Atlantic rainforest, and Bahia's capital city, Salvador da Bahia.

Participants will have the opportunity to learn about different facets of Brazilian and Bahian society from a range of speakers and local leaders. Past participants have had explored through the trip their interest in Brazil, poverty alleviation, race, NGO management, and global arts and culture.

The trip cost is US\$ 1,800 with proceeds supporting the Bahia Street Center's work. The study trip will be lead by a Brazilian-American with extensive experience in intercultural communication and strong ties to Salvador, with lectures by Bahia Street co-founders Rita Conceição and Margaret Willson.

Bahia Street was founded by Rita Conceição, a Brazilian sociologist who grew up in one of Salvador's most notorious shantytowns, and Margaret Willson, an American anthropologist.

Bahia Street's mission is to break cycles of poverty and violence through quality educational opportunities for economically-impooverished young women and girls in Brazil. Bahia Street provides well-rounded education for 60 girls aged 6 to 16. Our goal is to support these girls as they go from illiteracy to university and beyond.

Bahia Street also provides hot meals, a place to shower, and a safe place and support in working through the emotional and physical violence they see every day growing up in the poverty stricken shantytowns.

Outside of Brazil, Bahia Street teaches new perspectives on NGO management and issues of inequality, poverty, race, class and gender. Bahia Street promotes education and international understanding, not only through its programs, but also through its infrastructure.

In 2007 Margaret Willson published a book, *Dance Lest We all Fall Down* which details her stories of living in the Shantytowns of Salvador and the development of Bahia Street.

In recognition of her work, Rita Conceição was awarded the World of Children Humanitarian Award in New York City on November 13, 2008. This award has recently been cited as the Nobel Prize Award for Children and seeks to showcase individuals from around the world that make a difference in the lives of children.

For more information about Bahia Street or the study trip and other programs, as well as for contact information, please go to the website: www.bahiastreet.org.