

## Lula Blames Slavery for Brazil's 'Social Abyss'

Contributed by Lana Cristina  
Friday, 01 July 2005

In his remarks today at the 1st National Conference to Promote Racial Equality, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, related Brazil's historical past as a slaveholding country to the socioeconomic disparities that mark Brazilian society today.

For the President, the system of enslaving blacks brought from the African continent contributed to the existence of what he classified as a social abyss.

"This system channeled wealth to a powerful elite and dug a social abyss that still marks the life of the nation."

Lula emphasized that the inequality that began with the process of slavery has consequences in the present.

"This secular inequality hampers development, concentrates wealth and opportunities in the same hands, and condemns the country to realize only half its potential."

The President said that, precisely in light of this past, promoting racial equality constitutes an ethical commitment of his Administration. Furthermore, it represents a political and economic guideline for development.

Hoping to overcome the legacy of slavery, Lula said that his Administration created the Special Secretariat of Policies to Promote Racial Equality, with the status of a Ministry.

"Together, government and society, we are determined to overcome this historical legacy," the President observed.

President Lula said that Brazil was the largest slaveholding power in the colonial world, as well as the last country to abolish this form of human trafficking, in 1888.

He estimated that four million blacks, equivalent to 40% of the world slave trade, disembarked in colonial Brazil.

ABr - [www.radiobras.gov.br](http://www.radiobras.gov.br)