

Racism Can't Be Banned by Decree, Brazil Finds Out

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A recently completed study by the economist Marcelo Paixão, professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), Brazil, shows that the Human Development Index (HDI) for the white population exceeds that of the black population in nearly all Brazilian municipalities.

The HDI is an indicator measuring the conditions of human development and promotion among countries.

Based on information from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics' (IBGE) 2000 Census, the researcher calculated the HDI for whites in 5,202 of Brazil's 5,507 municipalities and concluded that the index is high (between 0.8 and 1) in 1,591 cities. The reality for blacks is different, Paixão observed in an interview with the Agência Brasil.

The HDI for blacks was calculated for 4,605 cities. In only seven of these cities does the black population display a high HDI: São Caetano do Sul (São Paulo state), Mozarlândia (Goiás), Rio Quente (Goiás), Brasília (Federal District), Goiânia (Goiás), Cláudia (Mato Grosso), and Vitória (Espírito Santo).

HDI scores range from 0 to 1. The closer to 1, the professor explains, the better the quality of life in the municipality. Where living standards are high, the HDI varies from 0.8 to 1. Where they are low, the index is less than 0.5. Scores of 0.5-0.6 are classified as medium-low; 0.6-0.7, as medium; and 0.7-0.8, as medium-high.

The study reveals that the HDI for blacks exceeds that of whites in only 13 Brazilian cities. All of them are classified as medium or medium-low in human development and are located in the North and Northeast regions. The study took into account the following indicators: illiteracy rate, level of schooling of the population aged 15 or more, and per capita income.

According to the professor, the results demonstrate the extent of racial inequality in Brazil, whether it be in the capitals or small municipalities. They also suggest that governmental policies are inadequate to overcome racial inequality in the country.

"The study reveals that racial inequalities exist all over, in large, medium, and small municipalities in Brazil. The country's leaders remain timid in their actions on behalf of inclusion. There is a historical resistance to the implantation of these policies for the country's mulatto and black population," Paixão affirmed.

To overcome the inequalities, the researcher calls for more reflection on how to shape policies of inclusion. In his view, the more the problem of exclusion is discussed, the greater the efficacy in achieving the objective of eliminating it.

According to the study, the municipalities with the lowest HDI for blacks are: Traipu (Alagoas state) - 0.49, Manari (Pernambuco) - 0.50, Jordão (Acre) - 0.511, Guaribas (Piauí) - 0.519, and Canapi (Alagoas) - 0.521.

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