

March of Brazilian Blacks Demands Adoption of Racial Quotas in College

Contributed by Benedito Mendonça
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Approximately 5,000 representatives of the Brazilian black movement from various states around the country, according to Military Police command estimates, gathered in front of the Brasília Cathedral today to commence the Zumbi+10 March against Racism and for Equality and Life.

The march took place a decade after the first March against Racism and marks the 95th anniversary of the Lash Rebellion ("Revolta da Chibata"), led by the black seaman, João Cândido, in Rio de Janeiro.

The organizers of the event expected roughly 10,000 people to congregate on the Esplanade of the Ministries to participate in the march and the other events scheduled for today.

According to the national coordinator of the Black Movement and the National Commission against Racism, Maria Izabel da Silva, the objective is to "demand" from the Brazilian State the implementation of policies to combat racism and promote racial equality.

They also want adherence to the guidelines set forth in the Declaration and Action Program of the 3rd World Conference against Racism (held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001), the legalization of areas occupied by communities made up of descendants of runaway slaves ("quilombolas"), and the application of racial quotas in Brazilian universities.

"In and of itself, the existence of the Seppir (Special Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality) in Lula's Administration already constitutes an advance, since it is a government organ charged with the intersectoriality of actions in the various Ministries and secretariats," Silva remarked.

"Nevertheless, we have a long way to go. We must guarantee non-violent treatment of the black population, combat religious intolerance, and accelerate the legalization of 'quilombola' lands," she said, to which she added that at present there are 780 "quilombola" areas in the country, "of which only a half dozen have been legalized."

Zelândia Cândido, the 81 year-old daughter of the seaman, João Cândido, also participated in the march. Together with the organizers of the event, she delivered a dossier containing the black movement's grievances to the presidents of the Chamber of Deputies, Aldo Rebelo, and the Senate, Renan Calheiros.

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