

From Cradle to Grave Brazilian Blacks Have it Tougher

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Thursday, 02 December 2004

The Brazilian Racial Atlas, launched yesterday, December 1st, demonstrates that racial inequality still exists in Brazil. Blacks continue to form the majority of the poor and destitute population, 65% and 70%, respectively.

The deficient conditions of nutrition and housing have a direct effect on expectant mothers and babies. Upon birth, the odds that a black child will not survive his or her first year are 66% greater.

Some progress was detected in the indices of child labor. The number of black youngsters who work in the 10-14 age group fell 40%.

"These data reflect the maintenance of inequality. One notes that seven of every ten very poor people in this country are blacks or mulattoes. There has been a constancy over time," laments José Carlos Libanio, Human Development coordinator of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The Atlas, which was prepared by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), is based on censuses conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in 1980, 1991, and 2000.

Besides forming the majority of the poor and destitute, blacks in Brazil also continue to face greater difficulty when it comes to health care.

The percentage of the population that had been able to receive medical attention in the two weeks preceding the study was greater among whites (83.6%) than blacks (69.7%).

The number of blacks and mulattoes who have never been to see a dentist is nearly double the percentage found among whites. The researchers discovered a similar disparity when it comes to health plans. The number of whites with such plans is 2.2 times greater than among blacks.

Life Expectancy

Whites in Brazil still live longer than blacks. This is another one of the many findings contained in the Brazilian Racial Atlas.

According to the study, a black born in 2000 can expect to live 5.3 years less than a white. In 1950 this difference amounted to 7.5 years. The situation of black males is still regarded as serious.

Their life expectancy in 2000 was 63.7 years, less than the 64.36 years whites could expect to live in 1991, nearly ten years earlier.

On the other hand, the Atlas shows that the life expectancy of black females is close to turning the historical trend. The life expectancy of white females born in 2000 amounted to 73.8 years, while black females could, on the average, expect to live 4.3 years less.

Agência Brasil
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