

Jacalyn Barrella

Brazil: The Troubled Rise of a Global Power by Michael Reid

Chapter 9: The Long Road to a Middle Class Society

The democracy made the biggest difference in the north east, since it is the most poverty stricken region in Brazil, housing about half of Brazil's poor population. Since 2010, the region has been doing well, indicated by an increase in regional GDP and income rates (Reid, 167). Drought is a big issue in the area, so farming was not sustainable. As a result of investments in business within the region many factories went up. The consumer market expanded, bettering the local economy; however, many were still living on a lower income than the national average (Reid, 167).

The number of people living in poverty (the cut off being the eligibility point for Bolsa Familia) fell from 49.5 million to 29 million in five years. By 2011, three years later, it even fell to 24 million. Income inequality began to even out as well. "Class C," stemmed from market research, could be considered the new poor of Brazil. These are people who make between 1,200 and about 5,100 reais per month. About 40 million Brazilians moved to this status between 2003 and 2011 (Reid, 170). Although many of the people within this class have more leverage in life, they still face challenges with education, occupation, and assets.

In order to form an equal society, public education must be made equal. Therefore, Cardoso's government reorganized the education system. Municipalities had responsibility for local education systems, required to spend at least fifteen percent of local revenue on schooling while the he federal government took care of higher education (Reid, 175). This all meant that funding went straight to schools, rather than filtering through the hands of corruption (Reid, 176). As a result, there was more attendance, but many students dropped out. The teachers were

not efficient in their attendance or lessons, failing those dedicated, knowledge hungry students (Reid, 177). As far as universities go, Brazil has the best in Latin America, but they do not compare to those in wealthier countries (Reid, 180).

According to the census of 2010 Brazilians were about half black and half white. A study done by the IPEA points out that blacks are relatively disadvantaged in society. There are many more blacks who make up the poor communities than that of the rich. Activists point to racism, as Brazil's roots are in slavery of not only Africans, but the native Tupi as well. They wanted affirmative action policies, while many opponents (at least those who are not just racist) do not want to create that separation of race (Reid, 181). Some action was taken in job markets and in university enrollment. However, Reid points out that the effects of "positive discrimination" might further separate different ethnic groups within the country (Reid, 184).

Favelas are the poorest of the deprived communities within Brazil. These crowded, dirty, and violence prone areas are always a shock to tourists, and a shame for Brazilians (185). Those in Rio de Janeiro are very dangerous, as drug gangs ruled. Corruption didn't help; at one point, officers were not even permitted to enter favelas. Although some people were forced to be displaced so that the land could be used for business purposes, those who have the choice tend not to leave the poverty stricken areas. This is mainly because transportation becomes the new issue. If those people got moved to suburban area, work would be out of reach (Reid, 186). Pacifying Police Units were inserted into the favelas of Rio. Their presence eventually became corrupt, but did great work in taming the fire of gang activity (Reid, 187). Although things have gotten better, there is always room for improvement.

Some police brutality and corruption led Cardoso to create a plan, obligating the Brazilian democracy to support human rights (Reid, 189). However, the policing system was

unorganized and separating, causing more crime and violence. Every state has two separate forces. The military police are those who keep the public in check. The legal side of things are dealt with by civil police. They barely worked together, leaving Brazilians feeling unsecure (Reid,190). The government used some funds to help the cause, by attempting to unite the policing community. As a result, more murders were solved, more police were on thorough patrol, and gun licensing became stricter. People of Brazil are worried about crime, and at the same time they are almost indifferent to the corrupt forces of the country (Reid, 190). Although doing a good job in equalizing the country, Brazil is still a new country that has to continue to try preserve the human rights of its people.