

From Brazil to The Planet: politics of race in the american black press

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From Brazil to The Planet: politics of race in the american black press¹

Resumo

In the passage of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, Brazilian and American Black intellectuals expressed their views on racial disputes over the Black press. This article evaluates views of Black politics in the U.S. and Brazil as an essential grounding of the struggle for civil rights, understanding the past of both countries as emerging from a collective experience of discrimination. The primary sources are the letters written by J. S. Moore, an African American intellectual who lived in Bahia, Brazil. Moore addressed his writings to newspapers such as the New York Amsterdam News, Chicago Defender, and particularly the Richmond Planet. His critics' articles debated directly with editors from 1917 to the 1930s. The dialogue between the American continents also sheds light on Brazilians' racial issues. It gives us a more complex perspective of the global fight against racism and makes it possible to understand the potential choices for resistance among diasporic societies.

Palavras-chave: black press; United States of America; Brazil, black activism; pan-africanism.

Do Brasil para o The Planet: políticas de raça na imprensa negra norte-americana

Abstract

negros brasileiros e norte-americanos exibiram suas perspectivas sobre as disputas raciais na imprensa negra global. Este artigo avalia as políticas visões de negros nos EUA e no Brasil como uma base essencial da luta pelos direitos civis, compreendendo o passado de ambos os países como emergindo de uma experiência coletiva de discriminação. As fontes primárias vêm das cartas escritas por J. S. Moore, um intelectual afro-americano que viveu na Bahia. Moore dirigiu seus escritos a jornais como New York Amsterdam News, Chicago Defender e particularmente ao The Richmond Planet (conhecido como The Planet). Seus artigos críticos foram debatidos diretamente com os editores de 1917 a 1930. O diálogo entre os americanos também elucida questões raciais de brasileiros. Assim, dá um panorama mais complexo da luta global contra o racismo e possibilita entender as escolhas de resistência entre as sociedades diaspóricas.

Keywords: imprensa negra; Estados Unidos; Brasil; movimento negro; pan-africanismo.

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Introduction

Historians of the Black diaspora have been arguing since at least the 1990s that the Black experience of emancipation has been interconnected in societies all over the world (Andrews, 2016; Cañizares-Esguerra et al., 2013; Domingues, 2013; Gilroy, 1993). The slave trade and the history of the Atlantic world, for instance, demonstrated that bondspeople developed a similar culture in colonial spaces such as Brazil, the U.S., Cuba, and Haiti. Those regions linked the exploitation of slave labor forces and the production of goods to political and social activities against racism across twentieth-century societies.

Under this comprehension, the colonial past reinforces local experiences as microcosms of the whole (Kolchin, 2000; Levi, 1981; Scott, 2000). The history of the U.S. South can help us understand some aspects of Brazil's post-emancipation experience beyond domestic boundaries. A dialogue between the American continents, explored in the African American press, sheds light on Brazilians' racial issues. It also gives us a more complex view of global racism and makes it possible to see the comparative potential of the history of the U.S. South.

The study of “Black uplift” in the U.S. South offers an example of resistance that tried to confront the oppression of the Black community. While many scholars have interpreted uplift theory as an attempt to foster financial self-sufficiency and as a moral judgment on the Black community, new interpretations reveal a different side of it. They innovate by showing that those interpretations of uplift are highly associated with an image of Booker T. Washington, the most famous advocate of uplift, created by his opponents. Washington's legacy as a Black leader remains controversial yet. The idea of uplift is much more than a mere reflection of Washington's actions. Recent historical works offer new insights into the achievements of the uplifting generation. They understand the Black elite as less influenced by class bias and responsible for collective development. Notably, those scholars have perceived the idea of uplift as rising from late nineteenth-century abolitionists' conceptions of Enlightenment humanist theories and Christian faith (Gaines, 1996).

The U.S. debate about uplift can support a new vision of Black activism in Brazil during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Brooks, 2017; Cooper, 2017; Higginbotham, 2003). As part of their “respectability strategy,” the Black Brazilian press denounced undesirable behavior within Black spaces. Rather than expressing bigotry, these Black Brazilian journalists demonstrated a desire to protect themselves from a greater threat, similar to the brutality occurring in the U.S. South. Such as the uplift theory, these uses of respectability in Brazil offered Black people a way to show that they deserved equal civil rights. They demonstrated to the Brazilian elite that Black people were ready and able to be part of national politics. But Brazilian elites instead viewed the rhetoric of respectability within the Black community as evidence that Black Brazilians could advance without full political participation. In what scholars at the time called a “racial democracy,” there was no need for racial activism.

One way to undermine the fight for civil rights was to coerce people to believe they did not need rights. Comparing Brazil’s post-emancipation society to the U.S., it is evident that the intensity of the violence was different in both places. Nevertheless, the discrepancy in severity between the two countries does not imply Brazil had no racial problems. Racial democracy perpetuated the myth that Brazil had no racism at all. This myth of racial harmony also created a paradox for Black people: if they had no racial conflicts, why should they fight for political participation or demand government solutions for their problems? According to this interpretation, their obstacle should be viewed as personal inequalities rather than an issue of political and social reparation (Guimarães, 2019).

An examination of the primary sources confirms this hypothesis. Indeed, the actions of Black people in South America, especially in Brazil, as well as in the U.S. and the Caribbean, have all sorts of common issues, and they were discussing similar ideas to overcome social racism and institutional bigotry against Black people (Germano, 1999; Greason, 2009; Lopes, 2008; Oliveira da Silva, 2017). Based on these surveys, this paper argues that Black Brazilians were well-informed about American racial challenges, while Black Americans had an overview of Brazilian society (Brito, 2019; Francisco, 2008).

In Brazil, as well as in the U.S. South, institutional violence silenced Black people’s voices and struggles for civil rights, by lies and betrayals, and in the North through

lynchings and disenfranchisement. The knowledge about each of the countries involved included misconceptions, such as the idea of Brazil being a “heaven” for Black people with almost no issues or biases (Hellwig, 1992). Alternatively, the United States was depicted as a “hell” because the explicit violence against Black people spanned both the South’s and the North’s racial relations, which were interrelated (Miles, 2017). The American South was certainly not heaven on earth, but perhaps because of that, many radical Black expressions from around the world were discussed and spread from there. Examples include Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism, as elaborated by Jamaican migrant Marcus Garvey, who, along with southern Black activists such as Bruce Grit, became famous worldwide.

This paper evaluates views of Black politics in the U.S. South and Brazil as a significant struggle for civil rights, understanding the past of both countries as emerging from a common experience of discrimination. The sources for analysis come from Brazilian and American Black intellectuals and activists in the mainstream and Black press, offering a broad perspective on racial disputes across the Americas. It also presents John Mitchell Jr. and the Richmond Planet newspaper by showcasing the arguments of I. S. Moore, who wrote more than ten letters from Bahia, Brazil, criticizing the newspaper and its editor's stance on Black politics between 1917 and 1922. The essay explains how the arguments of Black activists are developed in the diaspora from a Brazilian perspective, specifically by Professor Moore. The issue is to verify which statements he chose from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, and the reasons why this may have been the case.

If Brazil is heaven and the U.S. is hell, would God be Black?

Professor Moore, who wrote several letters from Brazil in the first three decades of the twentieth century, was critical of Black Nationalism, an ideology that the U.S. Black press reproduced. According to this idea, people should reconnect with their African origins and culture to value their own historical experiences and understand their position in the global context. This concept also includes the understanding that Jesus’s birthplace suggests he had African ancestry, and therefore God should also be Black. Religious nationalism affirmed that Black people needed a Black God, instead of

worshipping a white God promoted by white detractors. Moore associated the Planet's editor, John Mitchell – who professed the Baptist faith – with and Marcus Garvey's and his companion Bruce Grit, who claimed that God was Black. Moore criticized Pan-Africanism more than once; perhaps because he was viewing the actions of Black people from the perspective of Brazilian lands, he had a clear understanding of Marcus Garvey's idea and, according to him, the dangers it could cause. The Brazilian correspondence from Professor Moore is one example of how the Black press was able to develop an international community of Black journalists and activists.

The exchange of experiences in the Black press, supported by Black publishers, created a cosmopolitan Black intellectual society (Bairros, 1994). Nevertheless, this was not enough to show Brazilian prejudice against Black people, at least until Robert Abbott traveled to Brazil in 1923 (Butler, 2001). Certainly, the hegemonic Brazilian press would prefer not to acknowledge their awareness of the racial violence; therefore, journalists attempted to maintain this peaceful image of an equal society below the equator by turning a blind eye and deaf ear. Despite misconceived images from the mainstream press, the Black Brazilian press was trying to understand themselves within this context. Because if they perceived their society as less aggressive than others, they should also underestimate the racism and violence they were living in. Conversely, if they denounced the Brazilian racial reality, they could not have offered an alternative perspective on racial relations worldwide, thus destroying hopes for an equal world. In addition to that, they could significantly increase violence against themselves from whites, by undermining the self-image of benignity among white Brazilians.

Whether racial democracy was unrighteous or not, there was a Black Brazilian experience that inspired Black people of the Diaspora, especially before the First World War. African Americans wanted to learn from the Brazilian achievement of peaceful racial development. By that, this paper does not advocate for racial democracy, which is a flawed understanding of Brazil's past. However, it argues that we must seriously and carefully consider this “past fake condition” because it has shaped hopes and actions across the diaspora (Guimarães, 2019). Specifically, U.S. Black leaders admired Brazil's unsegregated society, even though Brazil was the last country to abolish African slavery. Brazilian racial democracy was sending a message to the diasporic world, a message

people desperately wanted to hear, and above all, one that people did not want to dismiss.

Black people around the world, in Africa, the U.S., South America, and the Caribbean, might see their diasporic presence as unified across different locations. However, the unique aspects of Brazilian racial dynamics have opened up opportunities for the next generation to achieve greater equality. Brazil symbolized the craving for a promising future. When Marcus Garvey first identified Africa as a refuge for African descendants, Brazil's symbolism suggested there was no need to return, even though the country's racial paradise was not truthful.

When the Black journalist and editor of the Chicago Defender, Robert Sengstacke Abbott, along with some other Americans and Africans, went to Brazil in search of a better place for Black people to live, they faced the unpleasant reality of racial discrimination (Andrews, 1991; Butler, 1998; Domingues, 2006; Francisco, 2010; Gomes, 2007; Pereira, 2010). The Black Brazilian press publicized the injuries Americans endured and discussed Brazilian racial idyllic. In this section of the article, I discuss how the debates over race between the two major countries in the Americas, as presented in the American and Brazilian Black and mainstream press, suggested that Brazil could be viewed as a leader in racial progress. It is crucial to demonstrate that there was more than a link and that racial ideas were not just coming from one place to another. In other words, it was not a one-way trip from the U.S. to Brazil. For instance, by cross-referencing newspaper statements and articles, I aim to demonstrate that from the uplifting theory of Booker T. Washington to the Pan-Africanism of Marcus Garvey, perceptions of Brazilian Black relations in the U.S. shaped the way Brazilians saw themselves and how they were perceived by others, limiting opportunities for fighting against discrimination and delaying Black Brazilian political activism.

From Bahia, Brazil, to The Planet

On one side of this front was John Mitchell, the editor of the Richmond Planet, a prominent Virginia newspaper founded in 1883. Weekly, he highlighted the white terror

and demanded the government to protect Black prisoners from mobs. His courage in facing white aggressors and authorities brought fame to him and the journal.

Indeed, in the 1890s, he sold over 6000 copies a week. The Richmond Planet drew the attention of politicians and a general audience, as well as white and Black American editors, such as Timothy Thomas Fortune, from the New York Globe. When Mitchell campaigned for Black folks to fight in the war against Spain, the Planet newspaper also became known in foreign lands (Alexander, 2002).

In 1903, copies of the Planet were sent to places like Santo Domingo, England, South Africa, Liberia, and Canada. Mexico and Brazil were added to the subscriber list, meaning that individuals or groups there were subscribing to and reading the Planet. (Alexander, 2022, p. 37). No more information is given about the people who were receiving the newspaper, including their nationality or which part of Brazil was receiving the Planet's sample.

References to Brazil were common in the "miscellaneous" column between 1899 and 1922. They also publicized missionaries' trips as well as the actions of Baptist churches and the interests of bishops in Brazil (Richmond Planet, 1906, p. 1). After Germany attacked a Brazilian ship off the coast of Bahia in 1917, news about the country's participation in the World War and the "Conference for Peace" became frequent (Richmond Planet, 1919, p. 4).

If war was a motivation for the Planet to notice Brazil, it came from Bahia, some shots at Mitchell. A person who signed as "Prof. Moore" or "I.S." Moore wrote several letters to the editor discussing controversial issues. From 1917 to 1919, Prof. Moore sent three letters, one per year, primarily arguing about the war. However, after 1920, the frequency and tone of the articles intensified. The Planet responded twice. One of them was not signed, but it seems John Mitchell wrote the answer himself. The other comment was made by someone named Bruce Grit who warned that I.S. Moore deserved few credits as a commentator (Grit, 1922, p. 4). Both articles responding directly to Prof. Moore's frustrations were written in 1922. Before that period, his letters advised Black people on how they should act based on government expectations about their participation in the war.

I was born and bred as an Anglo-Saxon. Probably, not wholly by blood or race, but by, nationality and breeding, notwithstanding the fact that the lily-whites say that I am neither. Well, I am not an African at any rate! Even, if such as I have experienced among Anglo-Saxons during my short life is their highest ideal of greatness, I do not care if I am not one (Moore, 1917, p. 13).

Those articles are framed as good advice from a friend, yet not from an equal companion. Mr. Moore told the reader that he was of Anglo-Saxon descent, even though he was not very sure about his own race as he “was born and bred as an Anglo-Saxon.” Effectively, he affirmed he was not seen as fully white either, meaning that no matter how he might have considered himself an Anglo-Saxon, his skin color was not white enough for supremacist movements, such as the self-entitled lily-white people. He confirmed that he was not African (Moore, 1917, p. 13). Prof. Moore identified himself as “mulatto” due to the refusal of the exclusively white people to accept him as purely white. The self-acceptance shows that even objecting to being African does not imply he had no African descent. In a future letter, Moore planned to make ferocious critiques of Marcus Garvey. For this reason, we might assume he could be a person of color who both physically and metaphorically rejected the idea of returning to Africa as something beneficial for Black Americans, a principle advocated by the Pan-Africanism movement. Despite his familiarity with Black politics of race, he did not identify as Black or as a non-white person.

Additionally, it is not possible to confirm that he was considered Black because he maintained some distance from his Black audience. He referred to the readers as “you colored folks,” and employed expressions such as “I would advise the colored people,” illustrating that he adopted a higher position than his readers. Every time he spoke about “American negro” in order to expose the issues of the “Black race,” he did not include himself as part of the group, and that might connect him with the image of a white advisor. Although his identity might have been obvious to contemporary readers, we must keep in mind that he questioned his own racial identity.

On the other hand, the distance he maintained could have been a rhetorical strategy, to gain the advantage of distinguishing himself from the speakers, similar to the authoritative position of a religious preacher, a role he might have adopted to present

himself as more authoritative and credible. Prof. Moore alluded to the Bible and the Christian God in all of his articles, writing: “So now you colored folks, remember that I told you that all this and worse was coming, and told you then, as I do now, to stand steel and see the salvation of God.” (Moore, 1919, p. 4). Moreover, in the subsequent years, Prof. Moore strongly disagreed with the editor’s evaluations of the Baptist Church’s actions, and hence his preacher’s tone became much more pronounced. Indeed, not only was John Mitchell highly committed to the Baptist Church, but the whole Planet had a Christian association, and that was probably true for the newspaper’s readers as well.

Emphasizing Christianity, Moore elaborated on how Black people should not feel less patriotic for avoiding fighting in the war. He asserted that the U.S. government was spending more money on Belgians and others in Europe than on the “best citizens at home,” the descendants of George Washington from “the old revolutionary days.” Moore emphasized that the “poor American Negro of those Southern States” should not pay much attention to international politics, because they had experienced being under the “punishment of others” and escaped, and as a result, “this should teach you that the cause of a nation should be of direct-concern by those in authority” (Moore, 1919, p. 4). Prof. Moore outlined the lack of housing, food, education, clothing, and hygiene for the Black population, and even emphasized their diligent work ethic. He noted that the basic living conditions for Black Americans were worse than for the rest of the country, which in his opinion, was “flourish[ing] with prosperity.” According to him, Black Americans needed to educate their children, grow food rather than cotton, and create a “healthy place in the market, and especially in all the various fields of industry” (Moore, 1919, p. 4).

These arguments were not new in 1917; Prof. Moore appeared to be reviving the uplifting theory. But he strongly criticized Booker T. Washington and blamed him entirely for the failure of African-Americans (Moore, 1919, p. 4). The advice for buying land, according to him, made Black men pay taxes to the government that prohibited their participation in politics, and that happened due to the “cursed leadership Booker T. Washington and his like” (Moore, 1919, p. 4).

Yes, many of those good, Christian Negroes have actually starved to death while taking their leader's advice about buying land, for which, they must ever pay taxes to a government which openly declares that

their participation is prohibited, and which grants them no justice in the courts, nor even humane consideration. Yet they are full and loyal citizens, thanks to the cursed leadership of Booker T. Washington and his like (Moore, 1919, p. 4).

Prof. Moore connects the leadership of Booker T. Washington to another issue, that of the mistreatment of political rights and legal representation for Black Americans in the legal system. It is worth noting that even as Moore argued that Black people should avoid political issues, he underscored the distinction between his views and Washington's accommodation, which contributed to political disenfranchisement (Gaines, 1996). It is especially significant in the context of the Richmond Planet that he says, "Booker T. Washington and his like" (Moore, 1919, p. 4).

"His like" was probably a subtle critique of John Mitchell, which thereafter became fiercer. As this essay has shown, the Planet's editor was interested in ensuring justice for Black people in the legal system, and he made every effort to defend those undeservedly accused of committing a crime. Many years before Moore's criticism, and not without dissatisfaction, on February 11, 1901, John Mitchell helped Giles B. Jackson, a politician from Jackson Ward, host Booker T. Washington for a financial conference in Richmond (Alexander, 2002).

Booker T. Washington's book *Up from Slavery* was published in 1901. Just a year after its American publication in 1902, the Brazilian newspaper *Diário da Bahia* released a serialized Portuguese version of the biography (Rios, 2000; Sodré, 1998). Even before that, journalists from the north to the south of Brazil were praising Washington's actions regarding Black activism (Tiède, 2023, pp. 112-121). The conference in Richmond and the fame of the Black leader in Brazil were not coincidental. The publication of the autobiographical book reinvigorated Booker T. Washington's career, and afterward, his views on racial development spread worldwide (Norrell, 2009). Prof. Moore bitterly stated in 1917 that while Booker T. Washington was in his glory, he was "deceiving and betraying the Negroes of the country, if not the greater portion of them in all the world" (Moore, 1917).

Whether Prof. I. S. Moore was Black or a white Anglo-Saxon; the truth is, he was very aware of the challenges facing the Black population, and he also knew that Booker T.

Washington's prominence extended beyond North American territories. Moore assumed that he might have betrayed a considerable portion of Black people all around the world. He was inferring something about Brazilians' relationship with Booker T. Washington's theories. But at this time, Moore acted in a tangential manner. Among the articles he had written, one referenced Bahia, and yet it was objectively linked to John Mitchell's deeds. Salvador, the capital of Bahia, has been considered since at least the eighteenth century one of the Blackest cities outside Africa. Consequently, it is quite odd that Prof. Moore did not conduct thorough analyses and comparisons of Brazilian Black conditions with those in the American South.

The Brazil Letter: Professor Moore criticism

Dear Sir,

For a number of years, I have been seeing, but not reading in their entirety, the outgivings of a self-expatriated American Negro and a correspondent of the Planet who is located somewhere in Brazil, and who calls himself "Professor" I. B. Moore. This man has wasted considerable of his time and reams of good white paper criticizing men and things in the United States about whom he seems to know as little as a three-year-old. His latest eruption in the Planet, directed against the Universal Negro Improvement Association and its President, Honorable Marcus Garvey, is about as silly in utterance and as bungling in form as are most of his learned diatribes on subject which he does not understand as is clearly shown by his crude, ignorant and garrulous discussion of them. This same Professor, some years ago when I lived at Yonkers, used to bombard me with his egotistic effusions from Bahia, Brazil, and after I read the first, installment of his chirographic inanities, I invariably consigned his subsequent installments to my capacious waste-basket. His comments on the U.N.I.A. and Marcus Garvey in the Planet of the 14th instant, will have about as much effect as the bark of a Pekinese directed at the moon. Who is this Professor Moore anyhow? And from what College or University did he get his title? Or, is he just a corn Doctor or barber, or expert guitar player calling himself Professor?
Yours sincerely, Bruce Grit (Grit, 1922, p. 2).

The journalist John Edward Bruce, also known as Bruce Grit, was a figure in the Black community who helped to understand Professor Moore. After several years of avoiding commitment to a Black political stance, in 1918, John Edward Bruce became an activist for Pan-Africanism, emerging as one of the staunchest defenders of Marcus Garvey (Seraile, 2003). As a prominent and respected newspaper writer, he identified

himself as a “negro,” strongly rejecting terms such as “colored” or “Afro-American,” which were used by people such as John Mitchell and Timothy Thomas Fortune, respectively. Primarily known as Bruce Grit, his articles were sharply critical, aggressive, and radical on race issues, and that was how he responded to the accusations Moore made against Marcus Garvey (Grit, 1922, p. 2).

Professor Moore was “a voice from Brazil” whose main objective was to “praise the Virginians against the dangers and impractical Garvey’s back to Africa propaganda.” Theodore Kornweibel’s book investigates everything about the secret service’s persecution of Black men involved in the First World War, with swift reference to J.S. Moore’s letter was held by the American Secret Service due to suspicions of betrayal and spying for the Germans, similar to what happened to other Black individuals who dared to compare Black lynchings with war crimes (Kornweibel, 2002, pp. 177-178). In 1918, the Chicago Defender stated that “Rev. I. S. Moore, pastor of the A.M.E. church”, made “several interesting visits in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Missouri,” after “took his remains for burial”

in Marshall, Texas (Prairie State News, 1918, p. 14). It also indicates that the same person was part of the committee of Hon E. W. Owens. It is possible that Rev. I. S. Moore was the same person as Professor Moore, and the writer was very close to the beliefs of the Baptist Church. No more references to I. S. Moore as an official member of the Zion church were found, however.

Moore wrote the Planet article on October 22, 1921, before Garvey’s arrest. He mistrusted Garvey, comparing his actions to those of the leader Chief Sam. In 1913, many Black Oklahoman families believed Chief Sam’s promise that they could achieve wealth and a better livelihood by fleeing to Liberia. According to Prof. Moore, Sam made a great fortune from raising money for the enterprise, suggesting Garvey had similar intentions (Moore, 1922, p. 1). Moore’s vision of Sam and the people who went to Liberia seems to be influenced by how the British and American press interpreted him. In the paper by Field and Coletu, it is possible to revisit the movement, whose descendants were interviewed by the scholars:

I began to understand how seamlessly the popular story of a charismatic charlatan had papered over the near-perfect storm of structural constraints the movement faced at every step [...]. But in spite of the steady stream of claims of Sam's fraudulence from ministers, officials, and professionals of Boley, the U.S. and British governments found no fault in his handling of the movement (Field and Coletu, 2014, p. 108).

According to Moore, Garvey's proposal was infeasible, and Black people should not give up their citizenship to go to Africa without education, experience, money, or arms to confront "civilized powers" and those under their control. Indeed, he points out that native Africans would even call upon snakes and other wild animals to help them guard their coasts. "And they will be doing right, too" (Moore, 1922: 2). Therefore, he asked the Planet's editor, John Mitchell, whether he would support all "Negroes in the world" leaving their countries and going to the U.S., hence challenging the white population. Moore teased Pan-Africans more than once, arguing that they should not try to outdo Africa; instead, they should "beat the lynchers [sic]" in their own country, emphasizing that they were unable to do so (Moore, 1922, p. 2).

Moore also implied John Mitchell was a hypocrite, suggesting he effectively would never go to Africa with Garvey "even if the white people offered you free transportation." He urged the editor of the Planet to "defend the right," and help advise Mr. Garvey "to make money without making a fool of all American Negroes." (Moore, 1922, p. 2). He elaborates on his arguments against the shady commercial intentions with the example of countries that seek professional businesspeople, like Brazil, which even had embraced war against Germans and Austrians, and was "anxious" to receive immigrants from these nations "because they are the most thrifty and scientific people in the world" (Moore, 1922, p. 2). Here it is important to note that Moore assumes all Brazilians were anxious for European immigration, when in fact it was primarily former Brazilian slaveholders who desperately wanted the government to subsidize immigration to sustain coffee plantations. Eugenic-based immigration policies were disastrous for Black individuals who lost their jobs and homes and faced competition from whites along with European racism based on skin color (Domingues, 2000; Santos, 1998).

Furthermore, Professor Moore referenced Brazil once more in this article to criticize Mitchell's politics, which he believed supported the Pan-African cause. Moore

articulated a religious puzzle that connected Mitchell and his group to Black Nationalism, as well as to the diplomacy of Methodist missionaries who had traveled to Brazil a year earlier. He reported that “your crowd” – implying that the missionaries were connected to Mitchell’s faith organization – “made a very bad impression.” (Moore, 1922, p. 2).

Still, it is possible to reject his conclusion about the trip. Meire Lucia Alves dos Rios demonstrated that when Black American bishops and professors visited Salvador, newspapers such as *Diário da Bahia* and *A Tarde* made appreciative comments: “on the street, they capture everyone’s admiration with their towering stature, always laughing with a Kodak [camera] in their hands.” All of them are Black, having come here by steamship *Manaus* from Rio de Janeiro [...] huge and smiling people (translated by the author). [“na rua despertam atenção geral, com a sua estatura de gigantes, sempre rindo de “Kodak” em punho. São todos pretos, vieram para aqui no *Manaus* do Rio de Janeiro [...] enormes e sorridentes”] (Rios, 2000).

Moore could have many reasons related to the developments in Pan-Africanism and its growing popularity worldwide. Along with the Pan-African Congress in Brussels (Kodi, 1984). The mainstream Brazilian press published at least seventeen different articles about it along with Marcus Garvey’s statements. That is important because since Booker T. Washington, no other Black leader has had such press coverage in Brazil. Newspapers and magazines from Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Paraná, and Santa Catarina, as well as one Black newspaper from Campinas and a foreign magazine published in Brazil, commented on whether they agreed or disagreed with his political views. That implies Brazilians were paying attention to Pan-African ideas despite their presumed certainty of harmonious racial relationships within the nation. Therefore, this means that these articles can provide broader insights into the changes perceived by Brazilian society regarding their position as a post-slave society.

South America speaks

For nearly three decades, Professor Moore sent letters from Bahia to several Black newspapers in the U.S. In the 1920s, he criticized the *Richmond Planet* and John Mitchell Jr. It seems that during those days he was formulating what would become his

main argument in the 1930s and 1940s: the problem of self-segregation. For Moore, segregation was the intent of the Black folks to thrive without competing with white people. He was not interested in the separation promoted by whites; he explained to Black individuals why they should not promote exclusively Black spaces, such as “negro schools”.

To explain his views on segregation, this article first presents some examples of Moore’s comments about Black neighborhoods, Black schools, and the issue of Black leadership. For him, those issues were matters of social equality. Professor Moore failed to fully understand the U.S. nuances on racial issues, which led him to make judgments that could be interpreted as racist. In the final part of this paper, I argue that his experiences with race in Brazil, even with the concept of racial democracy, influenced how he interpreted various racial events in the U.S.

The thoughts on the Brazilian ideal of race were closely associated with Professor Moore, to the extent that he incorporated arguments from some of the most radical conservative racial perspectives in Brazil to support segregation, as I demonstrate at the end of this article. For instance, it is possible to see how in 1932, as he was writing as a voice of South America:

I am also a bitter foe of compulsory racial or class segregation. I claim that it is more damaging to Negroes than to any other people: and especially to those in the U.S.A. If segregation is better for them, why does Europe dominate Africa? Why is not Liberia prosperous? And if the people are better neighbors to themselves than other races are, why does Liberia enslave the natives against the protests of Europeans? I believe that our people need a greater contact with other races and with modern civilization, to offset the countless number of years that the masses have been oppressed and kept in ignorance and superstition by the powerful few of their own Race. I. S. Moore.” (Moore, 1932, p. 14)

Condensed in the pages of the Chicago Defender are his visions of what segregation could do to Black people worldwide, saying that “compulsory racial or class segregation” was more damaging to Black people than to any other group. According to him, the situation was even worse in the U.S.A. and, he questioned his audience: “If segregation is better for them, why does Europe dominate Africa? Why is not Liberia

prosperous? And if the people are better neighbors to themselves than other races, why does Liberia enslave the natives against protests of Europeans?” Moore believed that Black people were in need of “greater contact with other races and with modern civilization” (Moore, 1932, p. 14).

I. S. Moore was very confident in his knowledge about race conditions not just in the U.S., where he referred to the inhabitants as “our people,” but also “all over the world.” To justify his arguments against segregation, he offers a general vision of Africa, specifically Liberia. But despite all the good intentions it might have had, it was full of eugenic prejudice. Disconnecting Europeans from their past as slaveholders, Moore claims that contact between races would bring advances to Black people. According to him, the prosperity of “colored persons” depended on interaction with “other races” and “modern civilization” (Moore, 1932, p. 14).

Moore wrote letters with similar content from Brazil to the Chicago Defender, the New York Amsterdam News, and the Afro-American of Baltimore after the decline of the Richmond Planet and its eventual bankruptcy. Generally speaking about race to the Richmond Planet in the 1920s, he became more focused in the following years on combating segregation. Nonetheless, his aim was not to expose white segregation. As summarized in the passage above, Moore tried to convince Black people that they should not embrace the idea of racial segregation.

Professor I. S. Moore opposed the separation of races so fiercely that in the 1930s he wrote two articles for the Chicago Defender estimating the effects of segregation on the “Negro education.” He outlined that there was no such thing as “Negro education.” For him, if there was a need to label education with the adjective “Negro,” it would imply that their education was different from that of whites and therefore did not hold the same value.

I have been protesting for several years, against the publishing of the term Negro education, by your charity funding's, for the auxiliary in the education of certain colored people, better known as “Negroes” in certain parts of those southern states. My reason for this is that it is decidedly detrimental to all colored people and especially those in the U.S.A., whether they belong to the North or South! “Negro education” at once taboos all educated colored people, more than ignorant ones. And

it excuses white people from having to compete with colored people for positions (Moore, 1932, p. 14).

The Black American press, in turn, praised the “Negro schools” of the South and gave credit to the Black teachers. Professor Moore believed they did not want to compete with white people for a better position. In 1921, writing to the Richmond Planet against segregated schools, Moore affirmed that “segregation is no cure.” For him, “equally and irrespectively applied to all alike, is only human salvation.” As an example of competition, he showed the brief success of the Black boxer, Jack Johnson. Jack Johnson avoided fighting against other Black people; Black people should prove themselves under the same and equal conditions as white people to demonstrate their worth. It is interesting that Moore quotes Jack Johnson not only because the heavyweight defended his title several times against white boxers, such as Jim Jeffries, but also because Johnson married a white woman. That fact, along with his victories against white boxers, shocked American society and made him a target. He had been convicted and exiled for forcing white women into prostitution, which led to the loss of his career (Hietala, 2004). Triumph among the Blacks was not enough; “they need to compete with others than themselves.” (Moore, 1932, 1926, 1925, 1934).

Moore affirmed that no more competent men and women had arisen since 1882 when special education for Black Americans was established in the South. He argued that Tuskegee and Hampton were responsible for Black persons’ potential being “destroyed.” The segregated schools were legacies of Booker T. Washington, whom he compared to “Father Hanson,” a character associated with Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Moore showed some compassion toward Washington by saying that if he “discovered his mistake while yet in life,” as Father Hanson, he would have escaped from “false friends” and “rescued many others of his companions” (Moore, 1920). As this paper pointed out, he accused Washington of betrayal more than once, but made it clear that the worst of his deeds was to lay the initial foundations for a segregated society and, moreover, for the “Negro schools.”

Moore evaluated the role of Black leaders such as Washington and Mitchell, comparing Black individuals to animals. He declared that Black people behave like sheep, crossing railroads without paying attention to the dangers, believing that if their leader

could pass without being hit, they could too. He tried to counsel Mr. Mitchell, who was a man of “fraternal and financial influence, as well as that moral persuasion,” that leadership should not follow old ways but should encourage people “to fight where he is and with the tools in his hands.” Moore did not agree with “colored people” moving to the North, nor to other countries. He emphasized that they should defeat lynching in the South and in U.S. territories.

In 1921, under the guidance of the Chicago Defender editor, a group of Black people were planning to buy land in Mato Grosso, Brazil, until Abbott found out that some Americans advised against it. It is true that living conditions in Mato Grosso were not comfortable at the time (the dispute over land between farmers and Indigenous Brazilians is still violent today), and that people could find better and safer land near the coast. To help his Black friends, Professor Moore made precise observations about the difficulties they would face if they went to Mato Grosso. He reinforced his thoughts about segregation, writing, “if you cannot live with your people in America, why let them take you away and place you in wild territory.” Again, his idea was clear: Americans should address the racial issues within their country, without distancing themselves from white people.

In May of the same year, furious with the guidance of the race, Moore once again compared Black people to animals, this time to horses and mules “who had been beaten over the head.” Moore says the responsibility for the mistreatment of the “animals” was “the more cruel [sic], hideous drivers... of their own race.” At the same time, Moore insists that segregation was the “negro problem” caused by the failure of leadership, and indeed, in 1936 he highlighted his dissatisfaction by using the phrase “Leaders Beggars” in the title of an article for the Chicago Defender (Moore, 1921, p. 3).

Moore’s rhetoric questioned when “such men as Kelly Miller, Pickens, Du Bois, etc. will open their eyes to these facts” that the matter was social equality and nothing else. Social equality through interracial relationships, including sexual intercourse between Black people and white people, was one of the deepest taboos in American society. It is part of the roots of segregation and the wave of violence against Black men. Based on the assumption that Black men were rapists and white women were potential victims, atrocities were attributed to Black citizens throughout the South. Even interracial

labor associations suffered from the accusation of promoting social equality when solidarity across races led people to unite their efforts beyond racial boundaries to strengthen class struggle for better working conditions. The fear of interracial unions is associated with avoiding changes to the racial order. Even when the connotation of social equality is reduced to interracial sex, the “lurid imagery of” it has made all kinds of efforts by Black people in various aspects of human life, including education, housing, work, politics, etc., be associated with a transgression in the “caste system.” (Gaines, 1998; Letwin, 1995).

Moore did not clearly defend interracial marriage, but he wrote openly about social equality. Had he made a clear public defense in the American South, he could have been murdered by white supremacists. Regarding this, it is understandable that he was safer being “a writer from Brazil” rather than writing about such a taboo topic in America. Although Moore tried to clarify his conceptions of social equality by outlining the similarities in life struggles between Blacks and whites. As an example, he described a hypothetical previous life of John Mitchell Jr. by narrating his efforts as an “infant” when he was “a printer, a typesetter, or a boot-Black” before becoming a banker and prestigious editor. He tried to show that Mr. Mitchell supposedly achieved his merits, just as Benjamin Franklin did, and by doing so, he reaffirmed that social equality was the same for both of them, Franklin and Mitchell, regardless of their races.

His consternation about the segregation of Black people from whites increased to the point where he tried to engage with Black individuals as much as he could. He used Biblical examples, claimed Africans needed civilized societies to improve, compared different professions such as teachers and boxers, calculated costs, and portrayed Brazil, where he lived, as a jungle with no rules or laws. He wrote from Brazil for at least 30 years and had arguments with almost every prominent Black journalist in the U.S. He described himself as not purely of Anglo-Saxon descent and was identified by others as African-American and also as Brazilian, according to the *Chicago Defender*. This became an undeniable reason for him to advocate for racial equality. He worked on several issues affecting Black Americans and was critical of the leadership's actions without mercy. Of course, his mind was in the U.S. the whole time.

Still, the promises of Brazilian racial democracy captivated him. It seems that social equality and racial democracy could form the ideological corpus in his arguments. For Moore to explain his concept of human equality, he articulated the principle of racial mixing, as surveys on racial democracy showed. During the 1930s, Moore argued that America was formed not just by white people, but also by “reds” and Blacks, and, according to him, this condition underscored the true cosmopolitan characteristic of the U.S.: a country made up of the “extract of every race.”

This argument is part of the formation of all colonized societies. Brazilian racial democracy reinforced the myth of a harmonious society in such a way that, during the 1930s, it was almost impossible to understand the mixing of races through other lenses, such as the use of force against Black and Indigenous people. If in Brazil, the “extract of the race” would produce something as sweet as racial harmony, why should the U.S. Black people want to segregate themselves from whites? Why don't they embrace social equality as a whole? By exposing that segregation from whites was a mistake for Black people, Moore advocated for the same concept as the Brazilian myth of “racial paradise.” The concept of racial democracy, as I have shown in the first part of this article, typically frames equality as a matter of Black achievement rather than as a result of civil rights.

Moore goes further in his interpretations of the power of racial mixing. He used the same slogan as the Black Brazilian integralistas – who promoted racial democracy – to define American society. Beginning in the 1920s, but gaining significant momentum in the following decade, integralism is a right-wing political ideology that is explicitly fascist, nationalist, and Catholic-oriented. The Black integralism movement was highly controversial, partly because some of its leaders praised Hitler and Mussolini. Black leaders in São Paulo, such as the brothers Arlindo Veiga dos Santos and Justiniano Veiga dos Santos, who were affiliated with the Integralista party, asserted that the strength and supremacy of the Brazilian race came from the mixing of the three races. (BARBOSA, 1998; MALATIAN, 2015). The Black Integralism movement created a flag striped with three colors: Black, red, and white, symbolically representing the Brazilian races. It is interesting to observe the assessment that Professor Moore made of the American flag during 1921.

Because to start with, the nation never was purely Anglo-Saxon. Nor can it be, just yet! And that is the key to the mystery. The American flag represents a three- fold influence. And the one which most people are made to believe in the purest of Americanism is just the other way. And when the thing is made plain, many of the loyal patriots will wonder how they got into such traps (Moore, 1921, p. 4).

First, he claims that “the nation was never purely Anglo-Saxon.” The “key to the mystery,” according to him, lay in the representation of the American flag. The three colors were the “threefold influence.” He affirmed that people were made to believe in the purest form of Americanism, but the “loyal patriots would perceive that they got into traps” (Moore, 1921, p. 4).

The interpretation of the flag's colors as representing mixed races could be closely associated with the views of Brazilian integralists, thereby aligning Moore with this complex stance on race, if not outright racism. He was trying to show Americans that their own flag itself represented a mix of races. Of course, that does not mean Moore was a supremacist. It is his precise definition of social equality, combined with his experience in Brazil, that makes his thoughts unique and committed to an ideal of integration that does not imply the superiority of one race over another. Traps exist, both in the present and the past, to sow discord in the realm of racial relations. There is no doubt Professor Moore was trying to promote the best ideology for his people. The critical issue here is to demonstrate that Brazilian racial democracy was more than faith in racial equality; it was proof that inequality was a matter to be solved by Black behavior, and not by civil rights for all, in several parts of the world.

By understanding that Moore was articulating assumptions of racial democracy, which were permitted and encouraged in Brazil, along with racial equality, a concept that was a forbidden taboo in America. It is possible to think that Moore was trying to create a new concept for integration by combining those two ideas. Regarding these links, his criticism of Pan-Africanism seems natural. Marcus Garvey's conception that the place for Black people was Black Africa does not fully consider the role of mixed-race individuals in American society. Even the “one-drop rule” compelled mixed-race individuals to see themselves as strictly Black. Living in Bahia, Moore might have had an entirely different view of mixed-race societies. By imposing the myth of racial democracy, Brazilian society,

which is a melting pot of mixed-race people, must have seemed much milder to Moore. Also, it pointed to the possibility of a future less marred by racial violence and mob horror.

Conclusion

In conclusion, during the 1930s, Professor Moore was quite aware of the differences and nuances between Brazilian and American societies. He wrote an article to the New York Amsterdam News called "Equality in Brazil" (Moore, 1936: 4) in which he affirmed that believing a simple solution to American racial problems was to pattern after the Brazilians was a "lazy and fast" way to observe racial relations in Brazil.

Equality in Brazil

To the Editor of The Amsterdam News

Dear Sir – When you hear someone say that Negroes in the United States should pattern after those of Brazil, you may know that he is lazy and has not taken the time to learn anything about Brazil.

White people in Brazil are conceited and filled with pride for their race, but there is no place for great Negro institutions like Tuskegee and Hampton. A Black man has the right and privilege to aspire to any honor or position, and all classes would oppose the segregated institutions in the United States.

There must be a great social change in the United States before Negroes there can copy after their Brazilian cousins (Moore, 1936, p. 4).

In this concise article, Moore elucidated that he knew it was challenging for Black Brazilians, as they do not have the support of all Black institutions. Nonetheless, Black Brazilians had the privilege to aspire to honorary positions, unlike their "American cousins." Moore's political view was linked to an optimistic belief about Brazilian racial relations. Since the 1920s, Moore has been inferring knowledge about Brazil's racial conceptions without accurately quoting Brazilian ideology about race. Then, this piece above, written in the mid-1930s, shows that he was championing racial equality and using his Brazilian experiences to argue that segregation would cause more problems than it would solve for humanity.

It is quite evident in this piece that for over three decades, Moore had tried to convince his American correspondents that segregation was not the right path to take

regarding this racial issue. Through his experience with his "Brazilian cousins," he realized that Brazilians were far ahead of Americans in matters of racial relations. This article argues and demonstrates through primary sources, primarily the Black press, that racial democracy played a role in influencing the thoughts of Black intellectuals outside Brazil. Through the figure and words of Professor Moore, an African American living in Bahia, it is possible to confirm that diasporic societies like the U.S. and Brazil have maintained an active dialogue about racial issues during this period. This investigation showed that there was a mutual exchange of intellectual knowledge across the Atlantic world.

It also demonstrates through Moore's experience that racial democracy and social equality can be studied together, as parallel concepts in the Americas. The idea of racial mixing was seen as something positive for the Brazilian population, while social equality was considered a crime in the U.S. at the same time. It is well-known that both societies, the Black communities of Brazil and the U.S., have a long tradition of discussing racial conditions. Further research can shed light on the conditions that led to such similar countries becoming racialized in such distinct and different ways during the twentieth century.

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