



thirteen
WNET NEW YORK

450 West 33rd Street
New York NY 10001-2605
www.thirteen.org

press information

WIDE ANGLE FOLLOWS FIVE ASPIRING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND EXPLORES HOW BRAZIL'S NEW RACIAL QUOTAS ARE AFFECTING THE COUNTRY'S FAMED "RACIAL DEMOCRACY"

Brazil in Black and White Premieres Tuesday, September 4 At 9 P.M. As *WIDE ANGLE* Continues Its Sixth Season On PBS

"Am I black or am I white?" Even before they ever set foot in a classroom, many Brazilian college applicants are now being forced to confront a question with no easy answer. As Brazil introduces American-style affirmative action in its college admissions process, one of the world's most racially diverse nations has launched a controversial dialogue about race and identity.

Brazil has long touted itself as a colorblind "racial democracy," where a complex mix of races live amicably. But deep disparities in income, education and employment have finally prompted a campaign for equal treatment for Afro-Brazilians. With illiteracy among black Brazilians nearly twice as high as among whites, institutions of higher education have typically been monopolized by Brazil's wealthy and light-skinned elite. Now, as racial quotas change the rules of the game, the challenges of defining black-ness and white-ness have surged to the fore.

In a character-driven exploration of how affirmative action is influencing Brazil and the way Brazilians see themselves, *WIDE ANGLE* follows the lives of five young college hopefuls from diverse backgrounds as they compete to win a coveted spot at the elite University of Brasilia.

Brazil in Black and White premieres Tuesday, September 4 at 9 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings).



Tuition-free and funded by the federal government, the University of Brasilia has long

been a training ground for Brazil's future leaders. Until quotas were implemented, the student body was up to 98 percent white – while whites make up only about 50 percent of Brazil's population as a whole. Now, 20 percent of the places in the incoming freshman class will be reserved for Afro-Brazilians, so students will be admitted not solely on their performance on the entrance exam but also on the basis of their race. The university will evaluate the sensitive question of who is “black enough” to qualify for the new quotas via a secret committee whose members review photographs of every applicant, to compare skin tone, hair texture, and even thickness of lips.

Brazil in Black and White follows five students and their families as they undergo the university's controversial new selection process. Seventeen-year-old Josie de Souza, who is from the impoverished favelas of Brasilia, believes that applying under the racial quotas will give her a leg up. “It's a right for all black people. Why shouldn't I exercise my right?” she argues. Rafael Mendes, the son of wealthy engineers, attends an elite private school and plans to apply in the general pool of applicants. Despite her light skin and blonde hair, Karinny Da Silva wants to “pass” as black under the quota system to better her chances of being the first member of her family to attend college. Iolanda Dos Santos, though she considers herself black, thinks participating in the quota system would amount to cheating: “Nowadays there are people who try to take advantage of being black. They look for a hand-out. I'm against this.” For the parents of Karen Demarchi, a white student who has failed five times to get into the University of Brasilia's medical program, the quotas guaranteeing spaces for blacks create an additional hurdle that stack the odds against her even higher.

Outside the university, *Brazil in Black and White* reports on civil rights activists pushing for recognition of the plight of the nation's overwhelmingly dark-skinned poor; a professor who fears that Brazil's experiment with U.S.-style affirmative action will inevitably lead to U.S.-style racism; and an aspiring model who is determined to break through the entrenched racial

discrimination in the Brazilian media. We also visit the halls of Congress where Senator Paolo Paim, one of Brazil's two black senators, is advancing a series of far-reaching legislative reforms that would expand racial quotas beyond university admissions policies to federal and private sector hiring. "In a country where at least 50 percent of the population is Afro-Brazilian, blacks don't even count for 5 percent of corporate management," he asserts. "Poverty in Brazil has a color. And the color is black."

WIDE ANGLE presents a very human portrait of Brazil as its people look in the mirror and tackle a sensitive new chapter in their nation's history.

After the film, **WIDE ANGLE** anchor Daljit Dhaliwal will conduct an interview about affirmative action and race relations in Brazil and the United States.

Adam Stepan is director of **Brazil in Black and White**. He has worked for PBS, National Geographic, Discovery Channel, BBC, ABC, CBS, and NBC. In 2006, he directed and produced his first feature documentary, *Samba!*, about carnival in Brazil.

Robert Stone is executive producer of **Brazil in Black and White**. His film, *Radio Bikini*, was nominated for an Academy Award. He is the director of *Guerrilla: The Taking of Patty Hearst* and a feature documentary about the Kennedy assassination, *Oswald's Ghost*.

For additional information and photography, visit thirteen.org/pressroom/wideangle or pbs.org/pressroom.

Major funding for **WIDE ANGLE** is provided by PBS, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Bernard and Irene Schwartz, Mutual of America Life Insurance Company, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Foundation, The Jacob Burns Foundation, Ford Foundation, Josh and Judy Weston, Rosalind P. Walter, and The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation.

WIDE ANGLE is a production of Thirteen/WNET New York for PBS. Stephen Segaller is executive producer. Pamela Hogan is series producer. Andy Halper is senior producer.

.....

Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters*, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Secrets of the Dead*, *NOW With David Brancaccio*, and *Cyberchase* - as well as the work of Bill Moyers - to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen reaches millions of viewers each week, airing the best of American public television along with its own local productions such as *The Ethnic Heritage Specials*, *The Thirteen Walking Tours*, *New York Voices*, and *Reel New York*. Thirteen extends the impact of its television productions through educational and community outreach projects - including the *Celebration of Teaching and Learning* - as well as Web sites and other digital media platforms. More information can be found at: www.thirteen.org.

.....

Press Contact:

Deirdre Branley

Thirteen

212.560.3130

branley@thirteen.org

Gloria Park

Thirteen

212.560.2063

parkg@thirteen.org