

ITP Research Form

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Paper Title: Race, Class and Juvenile Justice in Brazil

Abstract: This paper probes Brazil's idea of "racial democracy," and examines the ways in which racial inequality is perpetuated in Brazil. In-country research was aimed at exploring the ways in which intersecting notions of race and class lock Afro-Brazilians' out of the labor market, and contribute to the over-representation of Afro-Brazilian children in the juvenile justice system. The study revealed that the notion that Brazil is a "racial democracy"—or discrimination free society—is a myth. The myth works to the advantage of elites who dislocate racism by saying it exists outside of Brazil in places like the United States and Canada. In reality, social mobility is circumscribed by skin color, and the juvenile justice system functions as a site of racialized violence and abuse. White Brazilian youth however, who commit crimes are not subjected to the same kind of punitive treatment. This is true even when age and class are controlled for. Afro-Brazilians occupy a space of subordinate invisibility, and disavowals of race discrimination facilitate inequality. People of African descent however, do not buy into the idea of "racial democracy" as readily as Brazilians of other races.