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# Race In Another America: The Significance Of Skin Color In Brazil



## Synopsis

This is the most comprehensive and up-to-date book on the increasingly important and controversial subject of race relations in Brazil. North American scholars of race relations frequently turn to Brazil for comparisons, since its history has many key similarities to that of the United States. Brazilians have commonly compared themselves with North Americans, and have traditionally argued that race relations in Brazil are far more harmonious because the country encourages race mixture rather than formal or informal segregation. More recently, however, scholars have challenged this national myth, seeking to show that race relations are characterized by exclusion, not inclusion, and that fair-skinned Brazilians continue to be privileged and hold a disproportionate share of wealth and power. In this sociological and demographic study, Edward Telles seeks to understand the reality of race in Brazil and how well it squares with these traditional and revisionist views of race relations. He shows that both schools have it partly right--that there is far more miscegenation in Brazil than in the United States--but that exclusion remains a serious problem. He blends his demographic analysis with ethnographic fieldwork, history, and political theory to try to "understand" the enigma of Brazilian race relations--how inclusiveness can coexist with exclusiveness. The book also seeks to understand some of the political pathologies of buying too readily into unexamined ideas about race relations. In the end, Telles contends, the traditional myth that Brazil had harmonious race relations compared with the United States encouraged the government to do almost nothing to address its shortcomings.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Winner of the 2006 Oliver Cromwell Cox Award, Section on Race and Ethnic Minorities of the American Sociological Association

Winner of the 2006 Distinguished Book Award, American Sociological Association

Winner of the 2005 Otis Dudley Duncan Award, Section on Sociology of Population, American Sociological Association

Winner of the 2005 Hubert Herring Award, Pacific Coast Council of Latin American Studies

Winner of the 2005 Best Book on Brazil in English, Brazil Section of the Latin American Studies Association

"This is a blockbuster of a book. To a topic--Brazilian race relations--historically fraught with ambiguity, uncertainty, and disagreement, it brings clarity, logic, and lucidity, not to mention several truckloads of data. The result is the most important work on race in Brazil since Gilberto Freyre's seminal *The Masters and the Slaves* (1933). . . . The clarity and lucidity of Telles's findings, and the wealth of data on which they are based, make this book a genuine tour de force, and the most illuminating examination of Brazilian race relations that I have ever read."--George Reid Andrews, *Journal of Social History*

Edward Telles's rich and important book is the latest, and most systematic, sociological study of Brazilian race relations. . . . In this book, Telles greatly advances our knowledge of race's significance in Brazil and, to a lesser extent, in the United States. It should be required reading in any sociology course about Brazil and/or race."--Melissa Nobles, *American Journal of Sociology*

Telles skillfully diagnoses the dimensions and mechanisms of race discrimination and, in a lucid final chapter, identifies those policy solutions the government should contemplate to break with these nefarious patterns."--Mala Htun, *Political Science Quarterly*

Edward E. Telles's consideration of race in Brazil is a landmark study. . . . It sets a standard for the study of race in Brazil against which all future works on the subject will be measured."--David Covin, *Perspectives on Politics*

An amazingly detailed account of race in Brazil. . . . [T]he author makes a major contribution to the understanding of race relations, making this book required reading for anyone interested in the topics of race or Brazil."--Franklin Goza, *Contemporary Sociology*

Edward Telles's *Race in Another America* is an impressive comparative analysis on the maintenance of racial boundaries and forms of racial discrimination that focuses mainly on Brazil and the United States."--Kwame Dixon, *Latin American Research Review*

Edward Telles has written a book distinguished by careful research and attention to the existing literature in Brazilian race relations and society, supplemented by astute personal observations and reflectivity."--Anani Dzidzienyo, *The Americas*

"This is the first systematic scholarly treatment of the subject in any language by a fully trained sociologist. It is a highly valuable guide to the existing literature, and Telles' discussion by region of

Brazil is the most revealing I have read. Because he worked in Rio de Janeiro as a staff advisor for the Ford Foundation, Telles was able to tap all the best sources--both primary and secondary. His skillful synthesis makes this a book that will appeal to readers in many fields."--Thomas E. Skidmore, Brown University "With its unique combination of sophisticated demographic analysis, ethnographic research and cross-national comparisons, this book will have a significant impact on the now burgeoning literature on Brazilian race relations and, more generally, comparative race relations Professor Telles' multi-method approach will become a standard reference for comprehending Brazil's multi-hued population in comparative perspective."--Michael Hanchard, Northwestern University "Telles has produced what will long be regarded as the definitive treatment of race relations in Brazil. Mobilizing tools from historical demography, stratification, social movement, and policy analysis, he provides a water-tight refutation of the myth of racial democracy while analyzing the extend and causes of racial discrimination. He skillfully parcels out social boundaries as manifested in intermarriage and residential segregation, while acknowledging the distinctive impact of sociability on race relations. With the United States in the background, Telles makes a terrific contribution to the growing field of comparative racism."--Michele Lamont, Harvard University "Edward Telles has written an important and inspired book, one that will force those who think they know Brazil and who think they know America to examine their preconceptions anew. With Race in Another America, Telles has not only broken substantial new scholarly ground, he has created work that will be essential reading for anyone trying to understand the often complex and Byzantine workings of race in society. Race in Another America is a masterfully conducted journey through Brazil, and a prescient look at where America, in some respects, is likely headed. It will be of interest not only to scholars, but to anyone who cares about the future of race in the world today."--Ellis Cose, author of *Bone to Pick*, *Rage of the Privileged Class*, *Color-Blind*, and *The Envy of the World* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Read this book for a class. Intro chapter is hard going but it picks up after that and offers a lot of interesting and sometimes surprising info. Useful for students and researchers trying to get a handle on Brazilian society. Not intended for lay audiences.

very interesting book...came on time..that is enough

We used this book in my sociology class. I wouldn't have purchased it otherwise. Interesting book though. More interesting than most class readings.

Lived up to what was promised. It had minimal wear and tear and was significantly cheaper than anywhere else I looked

The author has taken a tiger by the tail and allowed it to whip him whither and thither against the rough currents of Brazil multi-racial society until there is nothing left to understand. This whiplash of a story leaves the reader dizzy but in the end no better off than when he opened the first page of the book. Is this purposeful obfuscation to mask Brazil's own dismal record of the "non-existent" Racial Democracy? From this dizzying presentation of meaningless graphics and a welter of unrelated and irrelevant facts, it is difficult to tell. The context and purpose of the book was to better understand the emerging realities of Brazil's racial situation by comparing and contrasting competing scholarly versions of that reality. However, neither version squares with the reality presented by Ms. Francis Winddance Twine, in her excellent book "Racism in a Racial Democracy: The Maintenance of White Supremacy in Brazil." Both versions of the author's chosen scholars seem grossly out of step with the reality depicted by Ms. Winddance Twine, and thus even if the author would have succeeded at his stated purpose (and he did not), what would he have proven? But worse, it is equally difficult to discern from the subtext what the author really had in mind here other than to obscure what is already patently obvious: Brazil remains a profoundly racist nation, living on undeserved reputation of having been a racially enlightened nation. After reading this book, only a few things remain clear, all of them unintended: (1) Brazil's so-called "racial Democracy" was an embarrassing, meaningless national racial sham; (2) those (Blacks) who fought to have it replaced had to go outside Brazilian society to put international pressure on the Brazilian government which had been living off of a borrowed and undeserving reputation and credit for its non-existent "racial Democracy;" (3) to the extent that there is race mixing in Brazil, most of it remains as it was during slavery: of the white male-on black female variety of sexual involvement; and (4) nothing has been done to redress existing racial inequities beyond official rhetoric (the same as was the case with the last two generations of so-called racial democracy). Where have we all seen this tableau before? In Apartheid South Africa and legally and illegally segregated America. Thus one can only conclude that consciously or not, this book can only be purposeful obfuscation to preserve a fig leaf to cover Brazil's exposed "private parts" when it comes to its colossal lack of motivation to deal with its race problems, which despite rhetoric to the contrary is every bit as bad, if not worse than in the U.S. One star.

This book works on concrete things: inequality demonstration of the black/brown population of Brazil. In every chapter Mr. Telles look for the proof of racial facts on field researches. He also presents some comparisons with the USA situation. He did a very good work on Brazil race realities and Brazilians fighters of racism should study Mr Telles book very carefully.

There's a lot of quantitative data in this book, but not a lot of analysis, real commentary, or much qualitative information. So with respect to solid data one might refer to in a report or debate, its great, but not always the most interesting reading.

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