

**KU  
CENTER  
OF LATIN  
AMERICAN  
STUDIES**

Latin

American

Studies

Outreach

# EL LASO

**BRAZIL/AFRO-BRAZILIAN EDITION**

Your digital resource for Latin American affairs—featuring timely field reports, lesson plans, articles and interviews.

El Laso

March 3, 2011

## Carnival Celebrations

By Lindsay Dudley



## Capoeira Today

By Calvin McConnell



## Brazil Lesson Plans

Compiled by Catherine Butel



## Afro-Brazilian Culture

By Mara Aubel



*Published by:*

University of Kansas  
February 2011

## Afro-Brazilian Culture and Carnival

By Maraci G. Aubel

MA Student, Latin American Studies, KU

Brazil has the largest population of Afro-descendants outside of Africa, approximately 90 million persons. In 1550, the Portuguese enslaved an estimated four million people from both West and Central Africa. The enslaved Africans worked in the sugar plantations and in the mining. They rebelled against this oppressive system, establishing *quilombos*, communities established by runaways. The institution of slavery was the backbone of the Brazilian economic development and was not abolished until 1888.

African workers not only contributed to Brazilian economic development but also to music, food, religious beliefs, and cultural traditions. The palm oil used in traditional Brazilian dishes is also a staple in Ghana. Capoeira has roots in Angolan martial arts, and Candomblé, a religion practiced in Brazil, incorporates Yoruba traditions. African cultural traditions blended with the Portuguese and Indigenous customs, creating a unique cultural manifestation.

Carnival is the most famous tradition in Brazil. In the 1660's, the Portuguese brought with them the staging masquerade. This tradition takes place every year forty days before Easter, and both African and Amerindian influences are visible during the celebration.

## Carnival in Latin America

By Lindsay Dudley, Outreach Assistant

### WHAT IS CARNIVAL?

Carnival is an annual festive season which occurs immediately before Lent. Carnival celebrations are believed to have roots in the pagan festival of Saturnalia, which was later adapted to Christianity, and evolved to become a farewell to negative elements in the season of religious discipline preparing for Easter. Carnival is traditionally celebrated among Roman Catholic societies as well as, to a lesser extent, Eastern Orthodox. The name "Carnival" derives its origin from the religious tradition of abstaining from consuming meat and poultry during specific days in

In Brazil, Carnival is celebrated everywhere. For example, the school of samba in Rio de Janeiro and the *blocos* in Bahia are both known for their elaborate costumes, floats and drum squads. In both states, Afro-Brazilian is central part of cultural expression. Afro-Brazilian uses Carnival to promote their culture and advocate for social empowerment.



Samba school parade in downtown Rio de Janeiro

Sources: "Carnival." Sheppard Software. <<http://www.sheppardsoftware.com/outhamericaweb/factfile/Unique-facts-SouthAmerica14.htm>>

the Lenten season. The term carnival, from the word *carnelevare*, literally means "to remove meat". The main Carnival festivities typically include a public celebration and/or parade combining elements of music, dance, costume, and a public street party.

### HOW IS CARNIVAL CELEBRATED IN LATIN AMERICA?

Brazil: Carnival is the most famous holiday in Brazil and has become people participate in local festivities at many different levels. The country stops completely for almost a week and festivities are intense, day and night, the largest carnivals taking place mainly in coastal cities. Dance, music, and costumes vary within the different regions of Brazil. Street bands, groups, and individuals participate in *blocos*, which are very common throughout different neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro Carnival in Brazil.

Bolivia: The country's largest Carnival celebration takes place in the *altiplano* city of Oruro, the folkloric capital of Bolivia. The celebration stems from Andean customs, centering around Pachamama (Mother Earth) and Tio Supay (Uncle God of the Mountains). The carnival starts with a ceremony dedicated to the Virgen del Socavon (Virgin of the Mineshaft) and follows with competing marching bands. The highlight of the Carnival is conducted over three days and nights, with fifty groups parading through the city of Oruro over a route of four kilometers. The groups represent various indigenous dance forms, and are accompanied by several bands. Over 28000 dancers and 10000 musicians participate in the procession that lasts 20 hours.

"BRAZIL HAS THE  
LARGEST  
POPULATION OF  
AFRO-DECEDENTS  
OUTSIDE OF  
AFRICA— 90  
MILLION  
PERSONS."

Mexico: In Mexico, Carnival is celebrated all over the country with a strong presence in Mazatlán, Sinaloa, Mérida, and Yucatán. People use costumes to celebrate traditional indigenous culture and also engage in dance and music. Carnival celebrations vary from performing theatrical shows to participating in rodeos. Each region in Mexico has a special Carnival practice specific to their geographical zone and one can find much variation between the different foods and drinks that are prepared and served during Carnival festivities.

#### ELECTRONIC RESOURCES:

This [clip](#) features contemporary samba music that would be part of the Carnival celebration in Brazil.

This [video](#) showcases and highlights various dances, parades, and costumes typical to the Carnival festival in Oruro, Bolivia. The video also gives a brief history of the evolution of Carnival in Oruro and throughout Bolivia as a whole.

This [slideshow](#) video showcases a parade during Carnival in San Juan Totolac, Tlaxcala, Mexico. It provides a great representation of the variety of costumes used by participants during the festivities.



**Carnival in Salvador, the capital of Bahia. Bahia is the Brazilian state with the most Afro-Brazilian inhabitants, around 80% of the total population.**

Sources: "Carnival." *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.* Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. 02 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/96363/Carnival>>.

"Oruro." *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.* Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. 02 Mar. 2011. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/433621/Oruro>>.

## CAPOEIRA TODAY : AN INTERVIEW WITH LUIS PINTO, CAPOEIRA MESTRE

By Calvin McConnell, Outreach Assistant

Capoeira's roots lie in colonial Brazil, where enslaved Africans fused their culture, religion and music into an art form of resistance and pride. Aiming to avoid notice from their Portuguese captors, Capoeira's founders disguised the martial arts training as dance, which explains the rhythmic movement so essential to its practice. The sport played a central role in the escape of many slaves and their sustenance in run-away-slave communities called *quilombos*.

Fast forward a few centuries to present day and you'll find Capoeira honoring the same mechanical and musical discipline yet broadening its pool of participants and practitioners.

Today, in neighborhood warehouses and gymnasiums in the U.S. and myriad locations across the world, *Capoeiristas* from all races, backgrounds, and ages bang on *pandeiros* (tambourines), defend with *esquivas* (ducks) and call for *chamadas* (challenges).

Luis Pinto leads Capoeira Forca Rara in Olathe, Kan. A native of Sao Paulo, Pinto's arrived in the U.S. with the goal of teaching the art form. He played competitive collegiate soccer as a way to go to school and earn a degree and instructed Capoeira on the side whenever he had the chance.

"It's the passion of my life," Pinto said.

More than a decade later, Pinto's Capoeira school has taught hundreds of Midwesterners the art and now has a steady enrollment rate of around 95 students annually.

The group has a long-standing relationship with Johnson County Community College, where it holds ceremonies and workshops, and is widely known for performing around the city at events like "First Fridays" in the Cross-roads district.

Pinto himself has received some of the highest honors in the Capoeira community, graduating to "Mestre," a top instructor rank, in 2000. And he recently received his purple belt in the combat sport and self-defense system Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, which is also taught at Olathe's Capoeira Forca Rara.

Accolades aside, Mestre Ninja, as Pinto is called in Capoeira circles, derives his strongest motivation and zeal for the sport from its utility for people from all walks of life.

**"We want to make it well-known in Kansas City like it is in other cities and countries.**

**—Luis Pinto,  
Capoeira Mestre**

Watch Pinto's Capoeira group practice and it won't take long to notice that people of all shapes, sizes and colors participate in the sport confidently—the gray-haired man, the middle-aged mother, the energetic junior high boy, the college student. And

including this diverse array of participants, Pinto says, is where he wants to take the sport.

"We can teach it at a deaf school. We can teach it to older people. We can teach it for college credit. We want to make it well-known in Kansas City like it is in other cities and countries," Pinto said.

To do the sport and its history justice, watch this [video](#) from KCTV5 Kansas City on Pinto's Capoeira group.



Pinto instructs a group of capoeira students at the group's November 2010 graduation ceremony.

## LESSON PLANS: CULTURE, GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT

Compiled by Catherine Butel, Outreach Coordinator

### INTERACTIVE WEBSITES

This [website by PBS](#) explores the diversity of the Brazilian Amazon targeted for grades 5-10. Students can use the site's activities to explore Amazon wetlands, animal predators, and mantle of the rainforest top. Teachers can find resources such as lesson plans and websites for the sciences and social studies.

This National Geographic [website](#) gives a nice overview of Brazil for elementary students. Students can find photos, a video, maps, and they can send an e-card to friends from this website.

### LESSON PLANS

"[The Sounds of Samba](#)" by Rosemarie Crocco Mongillo provides various lesson plans that can be used individually or as a series to teach students about Brazil and Samba targeted for grades 9-12. Each can be applied to history, social studies, music, and art classes.

"[Escolas de Carnaval](#)" (Carnival Schools), by the Arizona Center of Latin American Studies, teaches students grades 1-8 about Carnival and how samba schools contribute to the Carnival experience. The education standards focus is for reading, writing, listening, speaking, history, geography, and the arts.

### El Laso next month: Women's History Month

Check out next month's issue for articles on:

- Women Presidents in Latin America
- Female Artisan and Micro-Enterprise Groups
- International Women's Day (March 8th) celebrations

And as usual, check out our calendar of events, lesson plans, and electronic resources!



Paul Sneed, KU assistant professor of Brazilian Literary and Cultural Studies, with school children in Rocinha, one of Rio de Janeiro's many *Favelas* (slums). Professor Sneed co-founded Two Brothers' Foundation in 1998, which has sponsored a variety of educational and cultural projects in Rocinha.

### UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS CENTER OF LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES BRAZILIAN RESOURCES

You can borrow videos, CDs, and books for our Center for FREE! Below are links for rental instructions and resources available.

#### RENTAL INSTRUCTIONS

#### VIDEOS

#### CDS

#### BOOKS



Dilma Rousseff was inaugurated President of Brazil on January 1, 2011, becoming Brazil's first female President.

## Mark Your Calendars for...

### Meriendas!

The Center's Merienda lectures, provide an opportunity for students, faculty, community members and visiting scholars to share their experiences and research in Latin America. The speakers represent a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds. Presentations typically last 40-45 minutes and allow for audience questions at the end. A simple lunch of rice and beans is served.

Bailey 318 12-1pm Free

**March 3rd:** Anne Egitto, PhD Candidate in Anthropology, KU

**March 10th:** Pedro dos Santos, PhD candidate in Political Science, KU

**March 31:** Emilia Barbosa, PhD candidate in Spanish and Portuguese, KU

[Click here for a full Spring schedule of Meriendas](#)

### KU Brazilian Association (BRASA) Presents:



### Carnival! with SambaAxe NYC

**Location:** Abe and Jakes in Lawrence, KS

**Time:** March 5th, 9:00pm

**Cost:** \$10 in advance, \$15 dollars at the door

# March 2011

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
BRAZIL	28 <u>Food</u>	1" <u>Estomago</u> "	2 <u>Capoeira</u>	3 <u>Dance</u>	4 <u>Table</u>	5 <u>Carnaval!</u>
WEEK	Feijaoda	Movie	Workshop	Workshop	MESAO	w/ Samba Axe
→	@ 5pm ECM	@ 6pm KU Union	@ 5:30pm KU Union	@ 6pm KU Union	@ 6pm Henry's upst.	@ 9pm Abe & Jake's
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
				Merienda Brown- Bag Lecture Series Bailey 318		
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
				Merienda Brown- Bag Lecture Series Bailey 318		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
				Merienda Brown- Bag Lecture Series Bailey 318		
27	28	29	30	31		
				Merienda Brown- Bag Lecture Series Bailey 318		

**KU CENTER  
OF LATIN  
AMERICAN  
STUDIES**

University of Kansas  
1440 Jayhawk Blvd., Suite  
320  
Lawrence, KS 66045-7574  
USA

Phone: 785-864-4213  
Fax: 785-864-3800

Latamst.ku.edu

***LETTER FROM LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES  
OUTREACH STAFF***

**By Catherine Butel, Outreach Coordinator**

Nancy Compier and I are excited to be the Center of Latin American Studies' new Outreach Coordinators. This past Fall 2010 semester, with the help of Title VI NRC grant funding, the Outreach Coordinator positions were filled after several years of vacancy. We wasted no time boosting the Center's outreach efforts. We visited Washburn Rural High School to present on diversity in Latin America, were featured on Channel 31 for a segment on *Dia de los Muertos*, and, in December, we hosted a workshop for K-12 on the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Currently, we are redeveloping the Center's Traveling Trunks and outreach website, creating monthly outreach newsletters for teachers and community members, and are planning a Latin American Film Festival (April 13-21), Cinco de Mayo Teacher Workshop and Fulbright Reunion (April 30).

We are also assisting Dr. Peter Herlihy with a new course, Model Organization of the American States, which we hope to expand and share with other colleges and high schools. Additionally, we are thrilled to be working with other KU NRC Area Studies Centers to sponsor and develop events for the Spring and Fall 2011 semesters such as the Kansas Business and

the World Teacher Focus Group and a Migration and the Arts Workshop.

Nancy and I certainly are busy, but we are enjoying the opportunity to be a part of developing and promoting our Center's resources, as well as working with other Centers and KU faculty and staff! Please contact Nancy or me for any questions or comments at 785-864-3899 or at njcompier@ku.edu or cbutel@ku.edu.



Bailey Hall, home of the KU Center of Latin American Studies