

Geraldo Siffert  
Avenida Graça Aranha, 81  
Rio de Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro, 1 October 1960

Dr. Leonidas Berry  
412 E 47th Street  
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Dr. Berry

Soon after receiving your kind letter, and not knowing much about the subject, I asked the help of two experts in history of Brazilian medicine to inform me about scientific activities of physicians of African extraction here in Brazil. Yesterday I tried to know whether they have something to report. And they did not. According to our traditions (we are descendents from the brave Portuguese navigators of the XVI century) the color of the skin is an accident. If you read a newspaper, for instance, the description of a crime or of any other events, the personages are not mentioned as being albino, blond, red, dark, brown or black. The Brazilian melting pot leaves no definite boundaries among the races, and lots of people have African blood without knowing it or paying no special attention to it. The bright and intelligent Moors, that dominated Portugal for almost 8 centuries, were of dark or brown complexion and defeated the white or blond people that inhabited the country ("anaemic people", they said).

Slavery was abolished in Brazil, by a decree, without bloodshed, in 1888. Negres in Brazil, in the immense majority, still belong to the poor class, and cannot afford to have studies in the universities. But if they can afford to, they enter any university and are treated the same way white people are.

Some years ago, by spirit of imitation, in the large cities, some episodes of discrimination occurred (hotels refusing black guests), and the Congress passed a law (federal law) condemning these silly ideas: whoever breaks that law will be sent to jail.

You will find some mulattoes doing fine work in medicine. But they consider themselves in the same level with the whites, and no mention of the color of their skin is made. We are really a racial democracy. Segregation, if any exists, is based more in esthetic or education base, and economic situation.

With kind regards, I am

Yours, very truly,

Geraldo Siffert