



Brazilian Americans at Pitzer

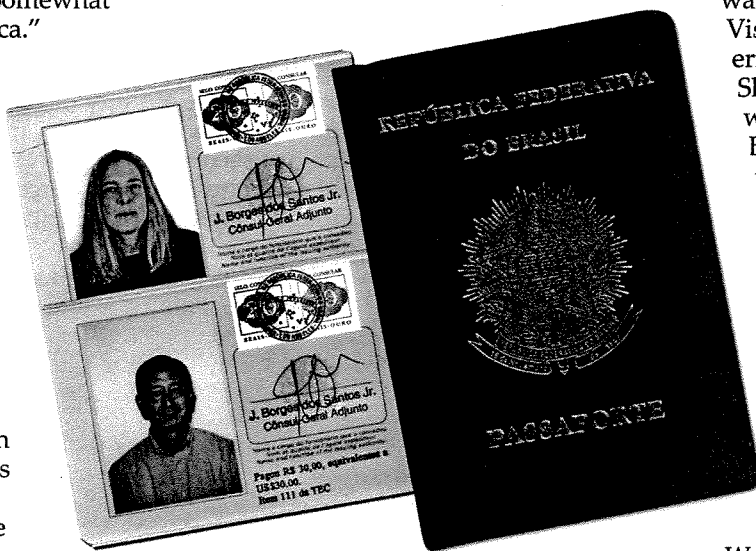
Once I went to the U.S. post office in New Haven, Conn., to mail a package to Brazil. The address of my family in São Paulo was clearly written on the outside. The post office clerk looked at the package and said "Brazil? Where's that?" Somewhat shocked, I said "South America."

"You'd better write that on the package," he replied.

From the mad passion of Carnival to the immensity of the dark Amazon, Brazil is a country of mythic proportions. Brazil is one of the largest countries in the world. With a population of 178 million, it is the fifth largest in the world, just slightly smaller than the continental U.S. Overall the Brazilian economy is the ninth largest in the world. Brazil has a per capita income of \$8,020, about one-fifth the level of the United States, and suffers from enormous income inequality.

While historically a nation of immigrants, Brazil became a nation of emigrants about two decades ago, primarily for economic reasons. Large numbers of Brazilians started to come to the U.S. from the city of Governador Valadares and the state of Minas Gerais. But now large numbers also come from the states of Goiás, Paraná, and Santa Catarina. According to the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, approximately 1 million Brazilians now live in the United States. But partly because many of them are undocumented, the U.S. 2000 Census counted only 223,000 foreign born Brazilians and 44,000 of their native born children. Most Brazilians live in the states of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Florida and California.

The majority of Brazilians are of mixed race. Brazilian notions of race, which differ significantly from American notions of race, are seriously challenged when Brazilians come to the U.S. Race is



generally viewed as a spectrum in Brazil, but as a black/white duality in the U.S. Furthermore, Brazilians in the U.S. tend not to self-identify as Hispanic/Latino, and the U.S. Census does not officially classify them as Hispanic/Latino either. This is partly because they speak Portuguese in Brazil, and not Spanish.

As an immigrant community, Brazilian Americans feel an enormous love, or more accurately "saudade" for Brazil, which is most clearly on display when World Cup soccer games are being played. At the same time there does not appear to be much community participation or solidarity within the community, particularly when it comes to financial interests. There are complaints about Brazilians in the U.S. selling jobs to one another.

Here at Pitzer College we now have three Brazilians on our faculty, significantly over-representing their share of the U.S. population by a factor of 15. Lêda Martins is an assistant professor of anthropology. She was born and raised in Boa Vista, the capital of the northern Brazilian state of Roraima. She did her undergraduate work at the University of Brasília, and then came to the United States to do her graduate work at Cornell University. She joined the Pitzer faculty in 2004.

Kathryn Miller is a professor of art. She was born and raised in Rio de Janeiro. People from Rio are called Cariocas. After graduating from high school in Rio, she came to the United States to attend college at George Washington University. She joined the Pitzer faculty in 1993.

And I am a professor of economics, and have been at Pitzer since 1988. While I was born and mostly raised in the U.S., I carry a Brazilian passport because my Japanese family is from São Paulo. People from São Paulo are called Paulistas. There are, in fact, more Japanese in Brazil than in any other country outside of Japan.

Whenever we can, Lêda, Kathryn and I like to go to Green Field, a Brazilian churrascaria in West Covina where you can eat endless amounts of Brazilian barbecue washed down by either caipirinhas or guarana. If you ever want to go, we would be happy for you to join us and talk with you about Brazil.

—Linus Yamane, professor of economics