

not be sentenced to prison but dishonorably discharged from the Army.

After being forced out of the Army, we spent a good deal of time roaming the streets of São Paulo, with no money and no place to call home. Despite the lack of a prison sentence, we were continually persecuted by the police.

I remember an incident in São Paulo around this time, when we were hungry, out on the streets, and had no money. We resorted to all sorts of tactics to survive. The Italian invasion of Abyssinia was the big news item of the day, and Rodrigues and I were constantly defending the Abyssinians. Our strategy was this. There was an Italian vendor who sold candies and snack foods on a convenient street corner. I would engage him in heated debate over Abyssinia's occupation, and while he was wildly gesticulating and exalting the heroism of the Italian nation, Rodrigues Alves would sneak behind him and pilfer a few items for our lunch.

Finally, the situation became untenable. In 1936, I moved to Rio de Janeiro. This was my first trip outside São Paulo State. Afterwards, though, I travelled back and forth between Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo on frequent visits of various durations. In Rio, I worked for newspapers, first as a proofreader, then as a reporter. I also went back to studying economics, which I had begun at Alvares Penteado School in São Paulo, and took a degree from the University of Rio de Janeiro. Once again I became involved with the Army. I registered as a cavalry student at the Center for Preparation of Reserve Officers. And once more I found myself dishonorably discharged, when I was arrested as a student in 1937 for protesting against the New State dictatorship. So ended my military career. There was a time later when I tried to enlist in the Air Force and be a pilot, but I was denied entrance, on racial grounds.

Brazilian Black Front—the Thirties

My first experiences in the Afro-Brazilian movement were in São Paulo, while still in the Army, in the ranks of the Brazilian Black Front (*Frente Negra Brasileira*—FNB). Some of the Front's leaders

had been working since the 1920s to articulate an Afro-Brazilian movement. There was the proposal for a Congress of Black Youth in 1928, in São Paulo, which never materialized. It wasn't until 1938 that I and five other Africans organized the first major Afro-Brazilian youth meeting, the Afro-Campineiro Congress, in Campinas, São Paulo. In 1950, the Black Experimental Theater (TEN) held the First Congress of Brazilian Blacks in Rio de Janeiro.

In São Paulo in the late twenties, the people and ideas were already there, but not until the beginning of the thirties did the movement become institutionalized in the form of the Brazilian Black Front. Among its founders were Arlindo Veiga dos Santos, Isaltino Veiga dos Santos and José Correia Leite, and as a mass movement it was the most important organization that African Brazilians had created since the abolition of slavery in 1888.

The Front held large rallies and protests against race discrimination in public places, the objective being to integrate Africans in Brazilian society. It fought against the barring of blacks by hotels, bars, schools, barbers, clubs, the Civil Guard, police departments and so on. In this sense, it was similar to the civil rights movements in the United States. As I recall, the Brazilian Black Front did not go far beyond this kind of demand, a perspective which I would criticize today.

I couldn't be very deeply involved in Front activities, because I was serving in the Army, whose disciplinary rules prohibited any participation in political or social activities. My participation in the Front was more symbolic and in spirit. But I remember *The Bugle of the Dawn*, the FNB's newspaper, which printed news and commentary about Marcus Garvey, the great Jamaican, and the African-American movement he unleashed in the United States under the slogan "Africa for the Africans, at home and abroad."

Despite the language barrier and the poverty of means of communication, the Brazilian Black Front kept alert to African freedom movements in other countries. It was a vanguard whose goal was to prepare African Brazilians to assume an economic and political role in Brazilian society, and to win black representation in the National Congress, a goal which it never achieved during its