

Racial Diversity: A Fairy Tale?

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Introduction

When I consider diversity, I think back to how things used to be. When I was a child, no one talked about racial diversity. It simply was not a problem, and we blacks knew our place. Why talk about diversity? Sin was black. The church preached it loudly and in no uncertain terms. Why would diversity even come up as a subject for discussion? A common evangelistic method utilized a tract called “The Wordless Book” that codified that sin was black.¹ So why talk about diversity? I remember we would leave our church and walk about three miles home. A few fellow Christians would pass by and greet us, “Good evening, brothers and sisters. God bless

1. The Wordless Book is a concept that has been in use for evangelism for over a century and uses five colors to share the gospel. Sin is represented by the color black. See, for example, the website Moments with the Book, “Wordless Book Examples,” <https://mwtb.org/collections/wordless-book-resources>.

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you.” Some of them saw us again later on us as we walked by their homes on our long trek. The Christian concern for our well-being never extended beyond the greeting. Why talk about diversity? I remember riding on my dad’s back as we happily sang the hymn: “I shall be whiter than snow...” Why talk about diversity if one day we would be whiter than snow? The discussion was beside the point if sin were black like us. The pioneers of the faith were white like everyone else who mattered. In pictures and paintings, angels were always white, and Jesus himself had pure, pale skin! So why even bring diversity up? Everything was resolved. We blacks knew our place. After all, as some affirmed, we were the mark of Cain and the result of Noah’s curse. What more is there to talk about?

When we think about Brazil and Latin America today, this question remains valid. Truly, why talk about diversity?

Perhaps we should emphasize two crucial points to start off with. First, diversity is a fact. Second, diversity was built into the structure of Latin America and Brazil through historical processes.

Diversity: An Indisputable Fact and an Acquired Fact

Reflecting on the first point, we come to the conclusion that diversity in Brazil and Latin America is an indisputable fact that no one can justifiably deny. By “ethnicity” I refer to a set of values, customs, lifestyles, etc., of a specific group. This simple definition encompasses many groups in the ethnic conglomerate across Latin America, including indigenous, Asian, Middle Eastern, black, and white. No one can respectably claim that the diversity among us is an illusion. We therefore affirm that diversity in Latin America, and especially in Brazil, is, in fact, a reality.