projeto Querino is supported by the Ibirapitanga Institute.
The podcast is produced by Rádio Novelo.

Episode 04: The Black Colonist

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Voice 01: A classroom controversy. A law signed by President Dilma creating quotas for students from public schools is dividing opinions.
Voice 02: Right, on one side, all the private-school students are against it...
Voice 03: Because it reduces the number of slots, which means more students per slot, and you've got to study harder, put more of yourself into it.
Voice 04: Now we'll probably have to study harder, give up more things, maybe even leisure time, to try to achieve something that used to be less impossible.

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Tiago Rogero: In 1760, a woman,
her name was Isabel,
made a request to a judge in Mariana, Minas Gerais.

Isabel's husband had died, and his estate was being managed not by her, but by the judge.

Isabel was asking for money so that her two children could stay... in school.
Asking for her own money, from her husband's estate, the father of her children.

She argued that one of the boys was studying to become an apothecary, which was the person who made medicines back then, the equivalent to a pharmacist today.

And her younger son was learning to read and write.

The judge said...
no.

He said to Isabel that, since her sons were brown –
that's the word he used – since they were brown,

there was no reason to spend money on their education,

and they really ought to go to work.

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> **Voice 06:** Look, racial quotas were just unanimously approved. But beyond this whole discussion, there's one principle we can't ignore. In this country, all citizens are equal before the law. Given the same opportunities, whether you're white, Black, or Indigenous.

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Tiago Rogero: In 1865, a teacher named Pretextato dos Passos e Silva sent a dossier to the imperial government.
He'd been trying for some time to open a school in Rio de Janeiro.
And his main argument was:
look, a bunch of families are asking me to set up classes for their children, who are Black and brown.

Pretextato said that, in other schools,

> "the parents of white students do not wish their children to rub shoulders with black students,
> and teachers are loath to accept Black children. Those they do admit are not treated well in their classrooms."

Pretextato also wrote that, because of prejudice against them, Black children weren't receiving a full education, since they were being intimidated.
And that in his school, discrimination like that wouldn't happen.
Because he, Pretextato, was a Black man.

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> **Voice 07:** I am categorically against admissions quotas at colleges, or anywhere else. Why quotas? Why? What are quotas for?

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Tiago Rogero: In 1967, “Realidade” Magazine, which no longer exists, decided to do an experiment.
They got two reporters to try out the same scenarios in Salvador, Bahia.

One was Black, the other was white.

One of the tests was, for example, trying to enroll a child in a school. Not bringing the child along, of course. But the reporter, claiming to be a father, would go in, ask to look around and ask if they were taking students.

The first reporter goes in. The principal,

> "very cordially told him that, unfortunately, they weren’t taking any more students.”

A little while later, the second one goes in. And the principal

> "smiled brightly, looked at her list and concluded cheerfully, ‘You’re in luck. I’ve still got some slots. Would you like to enroll now?’

Do I need to say which one was white and which was Black?

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> **Jair Bolsonaro:** You’re tricking Blacks into thinking they're going to college, that they’re getting... There’s going to be a bunch of stooges. They’re going to be tricked. It’s going to start a lot of fights among us. You’re fueling hate between whites and Blacks.

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Tiago Rogero: Brazil's first Constitution, the one back in 1824, imposed by Pedro I, was also the longest standing one to date. It lasted throughout the whole Empire, and only fell in 1891. And our first constitution guaranteed free primary schooling for every citizen.

And you remember, because we talked about it back in the 1st episode, who was considered a citizen back then, by the law, right?

All free persons born in Brazil.
Or Portuguese people who were living here before Independence.

The people left out, those who weren't citizens and thus weren't entitled to education, were Africans, even if they were free; and enslaved people.

Ten years later, an additional measure determined that states – provinces, back then – were in charge of education legislation.

And then there were states that felt the need to reinforce the ban on enslaved people in classrooms. Minas Gerais and Goiás, in 1835, passed laws saying that:

> "only free persons may attend public schools."

Like, that was already clear in the Constitution. But they wanted to say it again.

In 1854, in Rio, there came a decree regulating primary and secondary education. And it said that enslaved people would not be admitted to either.

Then, in the 1870s, well...

In school, you probably learned about the Free Womb Law.
We're going to talk more about it in another episode, but, to sum it up, it was a law passed in 1871 saying that:

> "the children of slave women born in the Empire after the date of this law will be considered free."

And then the masters were allowed to choose when they'd free the child:

at age 8, with compensation paid by the imperial government; or at age 21, when the child was an adult, and then there'd be no compensation.

Rather: all those years of forced labor by the child, then teenager, would serve as compensation.

According to one historian, Ricardo Salles, who studied how the law was applied, in 95% of cases, slave owners chose...

the 2nd option.

Ok, but what does that have to do with education?

The thing is, if the master chose the 2nd option, he'd have to educate that enslaved youth.
So there were states, like Minas Gerais – ay, Minas Gerais...
But also Bahia, Santa Catarina, Goiás, Paraíba, and São Paulo, which passed new laws saying, once again, that enslaved people couldn't be in classrooms.

So that not even those young people, who'd be free in a few years, could go to school.

The level of cruelty is unbelievable.

And even for people who were free, and had the right to go to school,
even for those who were, in theory, Brazilian citizens,

what did access to education mean in a society that rested on slavery?

In a society where a Black teacher had to start a school in his own house because the Black children in the neighborhood weren't accepted in other schools, by the parents of white children.

A society in which a judge could tell a widow that she couldn't use her money to educate her children, because they were brown and ought to get to work.

And even after abolition,
even more recently.

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Voice 08: A student at a private school in the South Zone suffered racist attacks by classmates on a chat app. Her family filed charges with the police.

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Voice 10: In messages in a WhatsApp group, a 14-year-old boy was the target of racist attacks by classmates. In the messages, the students bullied him, saying that they didn't know that all Blacks weren't poor, that they could have phones or go to school, and that they missed when Black people were slaves.

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Tiago Rogero: And these were just a few examples, but I could literally cite dozens.
Hundreds.

But, hey, if there's one thing that Black folks never did in this country,
it's take things lying down.

Accept their imprisonment
and just cross their arms.

Even with all those obstacles,
and even under slavery,

there were people,
and many people at that,

who were able to study.

Who learned to read so they could teach their comrades.

And that's not all:
by the rules of the very game that was designed to keep them out,
Black people became intellectuals.

Leading figures.

Revolutionaries.

People so incredible and inspirational that today, they give their name to, for example, this project.

I'm Tiago Rogero,
and this is the projeto Querino podcast,
produced by Rádio Novelo.

Episode Four: The Black Colonist.

There's a period that's considered one of the most turbulent times in Brazilian history.
Remember that, in 1831, Pedro I abdicated and left his son in charge, Pedro II, who was just 5?
Since they couldn't have a child running things, it was agreed that, until he came of age, Brazil would be governed by a regent.
And politicians traded off in that role.

In the 2nd episode, we talked a bit about how emotions were running high back then.

Just think: it'd been less than ten years since Brazil had separated from Portugal.
People were already afraid of recolonization, the emperor abdicates, a bunch of politicians step in...
And this is a giant country, with regions that have nothing in common.

Because of that political instability, rebellion after rebellion started flaring up across the country.
There was the Malê Revolt, led by Muslim Africans in Bahia,
and we're going to talk more about it in another episode;
there was the Ragamuffin War, in Rio Grande do Sul;

the Cabanagem, in Grão-Pará;

and there was the Balaiada, in Maranhão.

The Balaiada broke out over tension between the provincial authorities – like the local branch of the Imperial government;
versus rural landowners and local merchants.

A power struggle.

And lots of people joined in.
It's considered the largest peasant revolt to take place during the Brazilian empire.
And it has that name because of the leaders was Manuel Balaio.

But we're not going to talk about him.

> **Maria Natividade:** The first interesting thing is Cosme's full name. Cosme Bento das Chagas.

Tiago Rogero: This is Maria Natividade Silva Rodrigues, a teacher, historian, and sociologist.
She's talking about another leader of the Balaiada.

One who went down in history

as Negro Cosme.

> **Maria Natividade:** How did he place himself, how did Cosme see this slaveowning society? He was always aware of his Blackness, and he could read and write. He was a leader of the resistance and a symbol for us, for all Black people, and especially us here in Maranhão, where the Balaiada unfolded.

Tiago Rogero: When the Balaiada broke out, more slaves ran away.
And those people formed quilombos, and wound up being a part of the resistance too.
By one estimate, Cosme led troops of over 3,000 quilombolas.

And in the thick of it all,

he founded a primary school,
to teach people to read and write,

in a quilombo,
in Chapadinha, about 250 km from São Luís.

> **Maria Natividade:** The school was a necessity. Since he could read and write, he knew you couldn't be independent, you couldn't have justice or be free without schooling. So the school broke a paradigm, since schools weren't accessible. He was daring, he was extremely daring, in terms of his view of the other. He could see that these children would be future activists, we might call them today, people who would build a fair, free society, which was Cosme's great dream.

Tiago Rogero: The quilombo where the school was, Fazenda Lagoa-Amarela, lasted two years before it was destroyed by the imperial forces.

The Empire's repression of the Balaiada was led by the Duke of Caxias.
You know the Duke of Caxias, the patron saint of the Brazilian Army?
He led all the repressions of major revolts during this period.
In the Balaiada alone, the operation killed around 6,000 people. Six thousand people.

That's why plenty of people say he committed genocide.
But there are some who say he brought peace, too.

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> **Voice 11:** During the campaign, voters became divided. What words would you offer now to pacify the nation?
> **Jair Bolsonaro:** I'm not Caxias, but I follow the example of our great Brazilian hero. Let's pacify Brazil, and under the Constitution and the laws, we'll build a great nation.

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Tiago Rogero: It's funny, someone taking office as a self-proclaimed pacifier and ending their government being accused of genocide, too.

But let's get back to what matters here.
The records that still exist of the school founded by Negro Cosme are from the reports of the repression.
Multiple white leaders of the Balaiada were arrested and later got amnesty,
but Cosme was publicly hanged.

Clóvis Moura, the legendary intellectual we cited last episode, wrote that the Duke of Caxias only ever referred to Cosme as "the odious Cosme."

It was fear.
Not just of Cosme.
But of what he represented, and still represents.

> **Maria Natividade:** And for him to think of education, to think of others, that's what's interesting in Cosme. It's a lesson he's teaching us. I can't just think of myself. What about the others? The freedom I dream of, without education, it's not complete.

> **Tiago Rogero:** Absolutely. It's striking because, not only is he a major resistance leader, he created a school in a quilombo. But initiatives like those during slavery, of Black people creating primary schools, were really common, right?

> **Maria Natividade:** Just look at Maria Firmina, she founded one, too.

> **Tiago Rogero:** And hers was coed, right?

> **Maria Natividade:** Exactly, it was even more daring. Founding a school and putting boys and girls together... just think! That, Tiago, is where you see the degree of these people's political consciousness and engagement, even during such a tough, straitened time, they cried out. So when I think of Cosme's school, and his incredible political consciousness, that social alterity can only be addressed through education.

Tiago Rogero: Maria Firmina dos Reis.

Firmina, born in Maranhão, was the first woman to publish an abolitionist novel in Latin America, and the first Black author to publish a book in all Portuguese-speaking countries.

All that in 1860.

> **Eduardo de Assis Duarte:** Maria Firmina dos Reis, above all else, is a precursor. Maria Firmina dos Reis, above all else, is a pioneer. As a woman, and as a Black woman.

This is Eduardo de Assis Duarte, a writer, professor, and creator of Literafro, the Afro-Brazilian Literature Portal.

> **Eduardo de Assis Duarte:** A precursor as an author of literature, and in many other senses, as a woman. We might say that she was a feminist *avant la lettre*. A feminist before feminism came into its own, in the 20th century.

Tiago Rogero: Firmina was born free.
Her mother, Leonor, was a former slave and a single mother.

> **Agenor Gomes:** Here we are at Praça do Pantheon. Coming up to Praça do Pantheon.

Tiago Rogero: Praça do Pantheon, in São Luís, the Maranhão state capital.
I was being shown around by Agenor Gomes.
He's the author of the biography *Maria Firmina dos Reis e o cotidiano da escravidão no Brasil* [Maria Firmina dos Reis and the Daily Experience of Slavery in Brazil].

> **Dilercy Adler:** Here in the library, Nascimento Morais Filho did research, and he found Maria Firmina [laughs]. His first encounter with Maria Firmina was here, wasn't it, Agenor?

Tiago Rogero: And this is Dilercy Adler, a professor, writer, and researcher,
and one of the people who helped Firmina's story survive to this day.

> **Dilercy Adler:** It was in this library that Nascimento Morais Filho did a lot of his research, and where he found work by Maria Firmina, in the library's basement.

Tiago Rogero: From there, we went across downtown São Luís.

Dilercy Adler: Look at the Palácio dos Leões, this is one of the walls of the palace.

Tiago Rogero: Wow.

Dilercy Adler: The gardens are back there, they're beautiful. Just look at the architecture...

Agenor Gomes: This was the seat of government in Maria Firmina's time. When she passes the exams to teach primary school for girls in Guimarães, and then she's invited to receive her certificate of nomination here at the palace.

Tiago Rogero: Guimarães is the town in rural Maranhão where Firmina lived.

Agenor Gomes: In 1847, the Black daughter of a slave takes a civil service exam, in the thick of slavery, and she passes, despite all the barriers to her race, being a woman, all back in 1847.

Eduardo de Assis Duarte: And it's absolutely revolutionary, because there were schools for primary teachers, but they were all designed for young men. Most primary school teachers were men.

Tiago Rogero: After she passed the exams, she went back to Guimarães,
which is about 200 km from São Luís.
But in practice it's a little farther, because you have to take a ferry across São Marcos Bay, and then it's another three hours by car.
And that's what I did.

Antônio Marcos: The house was where these two are. From here to there [motorcycle goes by]...

Tiago Rogero: Ah, it was right downtown.

Antônio Marcos: That's right.

Tiago Rogero: Right off the main square.

Antônio Marcos: And here's the plaque they put up back then. 'This house was the school and residence of Maria Firmina dos Reis'...

Tiago Rogero: This is Antônio Marcos, a social scientist who I met in Guimarães, where Firmina lived and taught for almost her whole life.

Antônio Marcos: There were lots of plantations here. There was a warehouse to store products, and after she retired, she asked to use the warehouse to teach, to open it up to boys and girls, people of all extractions. They say she was a pioneer in school transportation, too, because she'd rent an oxcart, or get the oxcart drivers to take her students to class.

Tiago Rogero: There's something else about coed schooling.
It wasn't just a matter of putting boys and girls together in the same classroom,
which was disruptive enough at the time.

Eduardo de Assis Duarte: The creation of a coed classroom, back then, entailed something absolutely new: teaching boys and girls the same content.

Tiago Rogero: Again, Professor Eduardo de Assis Duarte.

Eduardo de Assis Duarte: That was absolutely revolutionary for the time, since education for girls barely went past the ABCs and basic arithmetic, and included embroidery, music, everything else that was seen as necessary for a future housewife back then.

Tiago Rogero: Going way back in Brazil, curricula were determined by gender.
Girls were practically only educated to be housewives, and nothing else.
Those who could study at all. Which, as we've seen, wasn't the case for plenty of people.

Claudia da Silva: I'm Claudia Cristina Rodrigues da Silva, and I teach Portuguese at the Nossa Senhora da Assunção public school.

Tiago Rogero: In Guimarães.

Claudia da Silva: In Guimarães. And recently, we've been talking more about Maria Firmina. Because when it came to material about her, we barely had any. Our books hardly talk about women anyway. The writer are all men, right? (laughs)

Tiago Rogero: Yeah, all white men.

Claudia da Silva: Yeah, white, too. You don't see women. I studied literature here, and I never studied a woman's work.

Tiago Rogero: And for students here in Guimarães, knowing that an intellectual lived here, who wrote an abolitionist novel, completely ahead of her time... what difference does that make for them? How do you see that?

Claudia da Silva: It makes a huge difference, because they identify with her. We have lots of quilombola communities, and our students come from those communities. So having someone who's nationally, even internationally famous, for them... they feel valued. Because Maria Firmina was Black, and she lived in Guimarães... And the students, they feel valued, they feel important. Especially because the families here are all of African descent.

Tiago Rogero: There are lots of quilombola communities between São Luis and Guimarães.
That's where you'll find Alcântara, where hundreds of quilombola communities are fighting against the Alcântara Launch Center, a Brazilian Air Force complex built during the dictatorship, and which was at the center of an agreement signed by Bolsonaro and Donald Trump in 2019.

To keep more families from being removed from their homes, the communities have struggled for years in court, even internationally.
And the basis for one suit was the research, and the book, by this guy.

Davi Pereira Junior: My name is Davi Pereira Junior. But around here, everyone calls me Junior, because it's where I grew up. I was born and raised here in Itamatatiua.

Tiago Rogero: Itamatatiua is the name of the quilombola community. It means "land, water, and fish."

After going to school in his community, Davi got his bachelor's degree in history, his master's in anthropology, and then his PhD in the United States, in Latin American Studies and African Diaspora Studies.

> **Davi Pereira Junior:** The parents here built the school for their kids to study. Because the local government never got around to building one. So the school was here. It was made of mud, about 4 meters wide and 8 meters long. It was one room, with wooden chairs. About 20, 25 wooden chairs, and a blackboard in the back. It was thatched with straw and daubed with mud. And a beaten-earth floor.

Tiago Rogero: Back in Davi's time, the school only went up to third grade.

So if you wanted to keep on learning, you'd have to go to Alcântara, about 60 km from Itamatatiua.

You'd have to go every day, but there was no school bus.

And then there was the other option:

> **Davi Pereira Junior:** Finish 3rd grade and just keep doing it over and over and over again... I took 3rd grade three times. Most people wound up giving up because there's no fun in it anymore. It's like you wake up in the morning and your day is a rerun, déjà vu, year after year. And I think a big part of my not giving up on my education was that my mom was a teacher. So that allowed me to stay in school, and she kept me from dropping out.

Tiago Rogero: Davi's mother was the teacher in the community school.

> **Tiago Rogero:** What was her name?
>
> **Davi Pereira Junior:** Maria Teresa de Jesus Pereira.
>
> **Tiago Rogero:** Was she born here?
>
> **Davi Pereira Junior:** Yeah. These forms of organization are interesting. Because you can organize around the school, too. Schools are another way to mobilize the community, in terms of people becoming aware... people who never went to school, for example, who were never able to go, but knew that their children needed to. That made it so that building the school was a process that everyone engaged in.

Tiago Rogero: Stories about overcoming the odds

carry an inherent risk.

The risk of slipping into the shallow notion

of meritocracy.

As if these cases,
which are the exception,
were the answer to everything.

As if all those years of barriers to education before abolition,
and all those years of neglected, prejudice-ridden education after abolition,

as if all that could just be fixed if people had

willpower.

If they were more like Cosme, like Firmina, like Davi's mother.

What I'm going to say next is obvious, but we need to remember it.

Education is the obligation of the state.
For all its citizens.

And if you still fall for that meritocracy crap,
you know, because we talked about it in Episode 2,
who really put in the work to create all of Brazil's wealth.

To make it possible for white folks' children to study at colleges abroad.
To create the inheritances that, to this day, pay for the education of those masters' descendants.

Willpower,
effort,
struggle,

merit

none of that was ever lacking in Black people in Brazil.

If it weren't for all that, we wouldn't even be here today.
Because what the Brazilian state wanted, after it was forced to do away with slavery, and no longer saw any value in its Black population...

What the Brazilian state wanted, and still wants,
Is to eliminate that part of the population.

But we're here.
More than half of the population.

The majority.

And Querino, this project,
is a direct result of those people who never gave up the fight.

And now it's time for you to understand why the project has the name it does.

In 1851, a boy was born in Santo Amaro da Purificação, in Bahia.
He was orphaned at age 4.
His parents died in a cholera epidemic that swept through the Bahian backlands.

The boy, who was free, was taken to Salvador and given over to a tutor.

> **Sabrina Gledhill:** Manuel Correia Garcia, his tutor, was among the first teachers and founders of an Escola Normal, a school that trained teachers.

Tiago Rogero: This is Sabrina Gledhill, an English researcher and writer who lived in Brazil for many years.

And she's saying that this tutor taught the boy how to read and write.

> **Sabrina Gledhill:** And back then it was extremely rare for any person, white or Black, to know how to read and write.

Tiago Rogero: In 1864, the Paraguayan War began.

To sum it up: Paraaguay was governed by a dictator,
Brazil stepped into a power struggle in Uruguay,
part of Argentina wound up invaded by Paraguay in the middle of the whole mess,

and then the three countries,
Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina,

joined forces against Paraguay.

And our boy, who was a teenager by then, was called up to fight.

> **Sabrina Gledhill:** First they sent him to Pernambuco, then he wound up in the battalion in Rio de Janeiro. But when they found out he could read and write, he stayed there. They didn't send him to the front, where lots of people died or came back without an arm or a leg.

Tiago Rogero: He was able to get out of Army service,
and went back to Bahia.

> **Sabrina Gledhill:** When he went back to Bahia, he started working as a painter/decorator to pay for his studies, taking classes at night. He was one of the founding students of the Escola de Belas Artes. A founding student of the Liceu de Artes e Ofícios; his name is there on the list of founding students.

Tiago Rogero: Throughout his adult life, he was a teacher, especially of geometric drawing.
He was a union man, too. And he founded two newspapers.

He was one of the directors of a Carnival group, called Pândegos da África...

You see, it's hard to sum up his life.

And at some point
he started writing.

> **Sabrina Gledhill:** He wrote two pieces on geometric drawing which were used in schools. He wrote a book of folklore, 'A Bahia de Outrora,' which I think is his best-known book outside Brazil. He started writing about art history and he wrote two books, 'Arte na Bahia' and 'Artistas Baianos'.

Tiago Rogero: He wrote many things.

His name was

Manuel
Raimundo
Querino.

> **Sabrina Gledhill:** A Black intellectual who was also an activist, a journalist, an abolitionist, a labor leader, a politician, a city councilman, a civil servant [laughs], and all that before he started writing. Because he only started publishing books after he retired. Then he became the first historian of Bahian art. He was a pioneer in studies of culinary anthropology in Bahia. What I find most interesting is that he was also the first Black intellectual to affirm that Africans and their descendants had made a positive contribution to Brazilian civilization.
>
> Because he demanded that Africans and their descendants be treated with respect, which I believe he wanted in his own life, too. Because when he wasn't the target of prejudice, he was treated with paternalism, which is the other side of the coin. Neither side is good.

Tiago Rogero: Manuel Querino did all that at a time when Brazil was gripped by the idea of so-called scientific racism.

I say so-called because there was absolutely no scientific evidence for it.

It was a bunch of racists, seen by society as scientists because of their degrees, spreading a bunch of bogus theories they couldn't prove.

But doing it in a refined way, in academic jargon.

It was bullcrap dressed up like science.

> **Sabrina Gledhill:** Scientists believed that Black and mixed-race people were fated to disappear, because they thought, in utter violation of all the rules of botany and biology, that mixing led to weakness. And that Blacks and Africans wouldn't be able to hold up against the quote unquote superiority of white civilization. Now, what were they basing that on? A system of slavery in which, instead of creating new slaves by impregnating enslaved women, they imported them because it was cheaper. They worked their slaves to death, under terrible working conditions. So these racialists concluded that they were weak, they couldn't compete with the alleged superiority of white civilization. But, as we can see, it was quite the opposite. Black people resisted and are here to this day. And that's where Manuel Querino came in, because, when he started doing his research, he decided to use his own example to show that the stereotype of Blacks as unintelligent was simply because they hadn't been given the chance to learn.

Tiago Rogero: By playing the white man's game, Querino knocked their arguments down.

And another key name in fighting so-called scientific racism was Juliano Moreira, the brilliant black doctor who revolutionized psychiatry in Brazil.
And he tackled racism in the arena of scientific knowledge.
Using science. Taking out each fallacy with numbers. By studying.

Querino was more about history, about the construction of the image of Black people, the construction of memory.

They both played an extremely important role in the struggle against racism,
each in his own field.

There's a piece by Manuel Querino from 1918
that's one of the most amazing documents I've ever read.
It starts out with the title:

"The Black Colonist as a Factor in Brazilian Civilization."

Look at the word he chose: “colonist.”

A colonist is a person who lives in a colony, a member or part of that colony.

Querino was placing Black people in the official narrative,
not as subservient slaves with no agency or knowledge, who were only good for following orders.

But as a part of the whole,
and a crucial part.

As protagonists.

In this book, he wrote that

> "the Black colonist is the principal figure, the chief driver of our economic wealth, the source of the nation’s current form;
>
> That it was Black labor that sustained Brazil’s nobility and owning class for centuries; it was with the fruit of their labor that we acquired the institutions of science, letters, the arts, commerce, industry, etc.,
> and thus they are owed a place of pride as a driver of Brazilian civilization.”

But wait, there’s more.

He names several Black intellectuals, such as Machado de Assis, the Rebouças family, José do Patrocínio and Cruz de Souza, and writes that they represent

> "the pinnacle of the affirmation of wisdom. True national glories.”

Manuel Querino said that Brazil possesses two triumphs:
the uberty of its soil,
which means fruitfulness and abundance;

So, the uberty of its soil,
and the talent of the mestizo.

And Querino went straight to the point about white slaveowners:
he said they were greedy and parasitic;
and that apart from high-ranking civil servants, the first waves of Portuguese colonists were convicts, people ridden with vice, and prison guards.

But the Africans, he called “heroes.”
Heroes.

Today, none of this is news to us.
But he did that at the turn of the century, when the authorities, and even scholars, only saw Black people one way: as a problem to be dealt with.

That’s why Querino is seen as the first Brazilian intellectual to cast Africans and their descendants as a positive force in our history.
To recognize the leading role that Black people played in shaping Brazil.

And that’s why we decided to give this project the name Querino.

Not because the whole project is about him.
And by this point, you know it’s not.
But as a way to honor him, a tribute.

Recognition for someone who came before us and paved the way.

A Black man, born 37 years before abolition, who made this whole revolution possible.

And all that because a Black child was given the chance to learn.

> **Sabrina Gledhill:** He certainly tried to, and I think he did include Africans in Brazilian history, and in a positive sense. Because Black people were always there, but they were generally seen as a terrible influence.
>
> He was an educator because he was a teacher, he wrote textbooks, but also because, as I see it, he wanted to educate Brazilians about Africans, the role they played, and their culture. And because he believed in the power of education.

Tiago Rogero: Not only was he a pioneer in studying Bahian culinary anthropology,
Manuel Querino was also a trailblazer of studies on candomblé.

But in spite of all that,
of everything we've said here,
he's not as recognized today as he should be.

> **Sabrina Gledhill:** Unfortunately, and I have to say, it seems simplistic, but if Manuel Querino isn't recognized, known as he ought to be, it's pure bigotry.
>
> He was passionate about education. And he used his own life story as a reference. He made a point of putting his own biography in the preface to his works. Because he believed that education was the only way for Blacks to advance.

Tiago Rogero: That ideal, of education as the path to ascension, was key to all the Black movements that emerged after abolition.

It was one of the pillars of the Frente Negra Brasileira, for example,
which was founded in 1931.

The Frente Negra's newspaper constantly criticized the way Black children were treated in schools by white teachers,
as well as the content of their textbooks, which

> "have given the Negro the impression that his ancestors were a bunch of drudges and that just because of that, young Black people must inevitably be losers."

The Frente Negra had a school of their own, where they took in not just Black children, but the children of immigrants, too. For example, the children of Japanese families then settling in Liberdade, in São Paulo, where the Frente Negra was headquartered.

On that point, I always remember what Sílvio Almeida once said.

It was a talk he gave in 2018, in which he quotes a classic article by a Black sociologist, Alberto Guerreiro Ramos. The article was "The social pathology of Brazilian whites."

<<<<< play button >>>>>

> **Silvio Almeida:** So Guerreiro Ramos, he starts arguing with some authors, they're even allies, who talk about "the problem of Black people in Brazil." Florestan, and so on. Guerreiro Ramos goes, "Brazil's problem isn't Black people. The problem is white people. White people are the ones who don't want to integrate."

<<<<< stop button >>>>>

Tiago Rogero: And when it comes to education, that's crystal-clear.

The people always trying to divide,
to segregate,
to separate,
the people who didn't want their kids to have Black classmates in expensive private schools,

were white people.

The people who handed Brazilian education over to privatization, under the dictatorship, helping to weaken an already undermined public system,

were white people.

And, once again, Black people didn't take it lying down.
They didn't just sit there.

In 1995, on the 300th anniversary of the murder of Zumbi dos Palmares, Black organizations brought 30,000 people together in Brasília, on November 20th,
in a march against racism, for full citizenship and the right to life.

The Movimento Negro Unificado delivered a historic document to then-president Fernando Henrique Cardoso.
It was a diagnosis of inequality in Brazil, but it also contained proposals.

Among them, the development of affirmative action for Black people to access professional courses, universities, and cutting-edge industry.

Then, in 1996, the Ministry of Justice held a seminar.
And Marco Maciel, who was then the country's vice president, said that:

> "compensatory measures in favor of Black people are not only a stage in the struggle against discrimination,
> but also the end of an era of inequality and exclusion,
> if we indeed aspire to a more egalitarian, more just society.'

In 2000, the first law establishing quotas was passed,
in Rio de Janeiro, setting aside 50% of slots for public-school graduates.

In 2003, the State University of Rio, UERJ, was the first to apply quotas:
for public-school graduates, Black, and Indigenous applicants.

That same year, the University of Brasília, UnB, was the first federal university to adopt the system.

And that same year, under Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a law was passed that made it mandatory, in all middle and primary schools,
public and private,
to teach Afro-Brazilian history and culture.
The result of decades of pressure, decades of struggle by Black movements.

Then the Democratas, the political party, filed a complaint with the Supreme Court, questioning the constitutionality of affirmative action policies. Of quotas.

There was a public hearing at the Supreme Court before the vote,
and one of the speakers was Sueli Carneiro.

An activist, philosopher, and a trailblazer in Black Brazilian feminism.

Sueli said that there were two paths for the nation placed before them.
One that was rooted in the past.

And another that dialogued with the future.

<<<<< tape recorder hitting REWIND, then PLAY >>>>>

> **Sueli Carneiro:** Those that look to the future believe that, while historical conditions led us to a country in which the color of people's skin, or their race, has become a factor that generates inequalities, those conditions are not written in our nation's DNA. They are the product of the action, or inaction, of human beings, and thus may be transformed, intentionally, by the action of human beings today. That is our hope for this Supreme Court: that it be a partner and a protagonist in deepening democracy, equality, and social justice.

<<<<< tape recorder hitting STOP >>>>>

Tiago Rogero: The Supreme Court decided unanimously that affirmative action policies are constitutional.
Unanimously.

There was just one Black justice at that session.
He's also the only Black person to have served as chief justice of Brazil's Supreme Court:
Joaquim Barbosa.

<<<<< tape recorder hitting REWIND, then PLAY >>>>>

> **Joaquim Barbosa:** It is therefore natural that affirmative action, a mechanism designed to put an end to this perverse dynamic, should suffer a reaction from opposing forces and attract considerable resistance, above all from those who have historically benefited from the discrimination of which minority groups are the victims.

<<<<< tape recorder hitting STOP >>>>>

Tiago Rogero: You might not have learned this in school,
but you know what Brazil's first educational quota law was?

A law from 1968,

under the dictatorship,

that set aside half of all slots in technical schools and colleges
in the courses of agronomy and veterinary medicine,

for applicants connected to agricultural production.

In practice, the law wound up benefiting the children of major rural landowners.
The white rural elite.
“Agro is everything, agro is pop.”

In 1985, as the nation returned to democracy, that law was revoked.

But back to 2012:
after the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of affirmative action in education,
then-president Dilma signed the so-called Quotas Law.

And that law is still in place today.

And a bunch of people spout off nonsense about the law.
Saying, for example, that they don’t support it because the quotas should be socioeconomic,
but not racial.

But the quotas *are* socioeconomic.

The first category is:
half of all slots are set aside for public-school students.

Then within that half,
within that half,
you have slots set aside for Black, Indigenous, and disabled applicants,

in proportion with the percentage of each of those groups in each state.

But that's just part of that 50%.

In other words: a poor white person who attended public school is covered.
They've got the rest of that 50% set aside for public-school graduates.

But the naysayers are just going to keep on spreading lies because,
well,
that's what they do.

And they're going to use that, hate, to criticize not just quotas,
but student loan aid, government scholarships...

Anything that tries to make access to opportunities a little less unequal.

> **Sabrina Gledhill:** Manuel Querino saw a whole group of people who hadn't been educated and many who didn't even ply a trade...

Tiago Rogero: Here, again, is Sabrina Gledhill, who's studied the life and works of Manuel Querino.
She wrote a book that looks at the trajectories of Querino and Booker T. Washington, a former slave in the United States who also made education, and the advancement of the Black population through education, the center of his life.

> **Sabrina Gledhill:** So their idea was to try to follow European notions of what was civilized, what was cultured, and fit Black people in that mold. The tragedy of it all is that they truly believed that the path to overcome stereotyping and prejudice was to show that Black people weren't that way at all, that there were cultured, intelligent, intellectual Black people. But that only managed to infuriate racists. Because they saw it as a threat.

> **Davi Pereira Junior:** Look, my mom always had this thing...

Tiago Rogero: And here again is Davi Pereira Junior,
who learned how to read and write from his mother, in their quilombola community.

> **Davi Pereira Junior:** ...because she'd always say, "It's hard, college is for white folks. It's real hard for Black folks to get in." Because she worked at a person's house, and she said that the entrance exam results were coming out on a Monday, and on Friday they already knew that their son had gotten in. So she believed that, you know, it's really hard for people like us. Because the elites control who gets into college. But she was dedicated to educating, to giving you the chance to read, to learn.

Tiago Rogero: In 2021, the number of people taking college entrance exams was the lowest since 2005.

Black students, who'd been 63% of applicants in 2020,
fell to 56%,

while whites went from 35 to 41%.

Because of a Bolsonaro administration rule.
That candidates who missed the 2020 exams, the ones held in the middle of the pandemic, those people who didn't show up wouldn't be able to apply for free.

And so there was a 77% drop in the number of applicants with household income of up to three minimum wages.

And those paying to apply went up 39%.

For all to see, the Bolsonaro administration was fulfilling its promise of closing the door on the children of doormen and maids,

and returning the children of the masters to their place of absolute, unrestricted

privilege.

What would be of Brazil without Manuel Querino,

without Maria Firmina dos Reis,

without Machado de Assis,

without Sueli Carneiro?

How many Brazilian talents have been lost,

how many are being lost, and how many will be,

simply because they're denied the opportunity?

There's an amazing professor of physics, Katemari Rosa,
who once told me something I never forgot:

It's not hard to find geniuses among Black people.

All we need is

not to be shut out,

not to be killed,

not to be shown the door.

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On our website, projetoquerino.com.br, you can find all the information about the project, as well as additional content. Website design by Àiyé.
And I'd like to invite you to read the full suite of material for projeto Querino that's being published in *piauí* Magazine, on newsstands and on the magazine's website.
This episode drew on research by Gilberto Porcidonio, Rafael Domingos Oliveira, and Angélica Paulo, who also ran production for the series.
The episode was edited by Lucca Mendes, with sound design by Júlia Matos, mixed by Pipoca Sound.
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Promotion, distribution, and digital content strategy: Bia Ribeiro.

The visual identity is by Draco Imagem.

The interviews were transcribed by Guilherme Póvoas and Rodolfo Vianna.

The narration was recorded in the studios of Pipoca Sound and engineered by Luís Rodrigues.

Script consultation by Mariana Jaspe, Paula Scarpin, and Flora Thomson-DeVeaux, with additional editing by Natália Silva.

History consultant: Ynaê Lopes dos Santos.

Executive producer: Guilherme Alpendre.

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See you next time.