



Princeton in Latin America February Newsletter

Special Reports From Attendees of the Princeton Club of Brazil's Princeton Week in Rio

I attended the Princeton Week in Brazil, which was organized by the Princeton Club of Brazil and supported by generous contributions from its members. The agenda included evening meetings and get-togethers, presentations on Princeton's recent expansion of its outreach efforts in the region (Professor Jeremy Adelman), the Brazilian economy (Arminio Fraga and Francisco Gros, former Central Bank Presidents [among other positions], Clarice Messer, consultant and author; and John Redwood, former World Bank official), educational outreach opportunities at US schools (David Hodge, Cultural Affairs Officer at the US Embassy), the "Cultural Politics of Surveillance" (Prof. Thomas Levin), the "Origins of Our Times: A World History" (Prof. Jeremy Adelman), and beautiful performances by the Nassoons at each of the venues. The Princeton Club of Brazil and each one of its officers, Roberto Pons (President), Jill Janaina Otto (Vice President), Michael Royster (Secretary), Luciana Barreto (Treasurer) and Pablo Jenkins (Young Alumni Chair, International Clubs Liaison) are to be congratulated on a very successful series of events that served to strengthen the presence of Princeton in Brazil and vice versa. I was given the opportunity to make a brief presentation on Princeton in Latin America, spoke with as many people as possible about our program and distributed PiLA materials. Michael Solis, '07, a current fellow in Chile, was most helpful, among other ways, by handling the registration of participants and the sale of shirts. He also was going to visit Viva Rio to help us connect with a possible future partner.

I took advantage of the opportunity of being in Rio to meet with Arminio Fraga and Francisco Gros, respectively, to get them involved in PiLA. They were both receptive and agreed to become members of the newly established Brazil Advisory Group. Their support will be most valuable in extending PiLA's reach further into Brazil, a country where the potential for fellowships goes far beyond our activities to date.

The Princeton Club of Brazil was kind enough to invite me to join as a member of their Advisory Group, a position which I gladly accepted and which I believe will be mutually beneficial to our respective organizations.

I arranged to have the Nassoons visit the Tavares Bastos favela where I was staying in a bed and breakfast at The Maze (check out <http://jazzrio.info/>). Overcoming an understandable reluctance to go where many had advised them against, they seemed to fully enjoy the experience. The Maze's founder/owner, former BBC reporter Bob Nadkarni, engaged a local cameraman who happened (I think) to be wandering through the favela, and Lucena filmed the Nassoons singing against the backdrop of Pao de Azucar and Guanabara Bay. A very good moment! –David Atkinson '63, PiLA Board Member



David with Jill Otto '02 and other attendees

Mike Solis '07 was also in attendance and contributed this report of his experiences at the event.

A year in Asia and six months as a PiLA fellow have been enough to make Princeton feel like a rather distant dream. Princeton in Brazil Week in Rio de Janeiro, however, cast me back unexpectedly into the world of *anaranjado* and *negro* that I hadn't been exposed to since graduation. Listening to the smooth, a cappella chords of the Nassoons and walking under the golden sun of a city where I had once performed my thesis research, I found myself contemplating the rush of relationships and experiences that defined my undergraduate education.

The week of events brought a mix of familiarity and novelty, with lectures by Princeton professors Jeremy Adelman and Thomas Levine about the evolving international world order and the phenomenon of surveillance, respectively, to talks with Brazilian economic powerhouses Arminio Fraga and Fernando Gros about Brazil's status as a BRIC state and its situation amid the economic crisis. With my alumnus eyes widened and my mind energized, just as happened during (most) undergraduate lectures, I left the events feeling hopeful, especially after hearing from prominent Brazilian leaders who were deeply concerned with issues such as educational reform, security, human rights, and deforestation – shadows that will loom ominously over a developing Brazil if they go ignored.

The Princeton Club of Brazil itself thrives with the boisterous, energetic, and quintessentially carioca spirit that propels its members. From the moment that I arrived to volunteer with the conference's organization, I was welcomed with nothing but *beijos*, *abraços*, and *amor*, all of which came from perfect strangers who, strangely, felt more like quirky relatives from some family reunion past.

The club is embarking on a series of admirable projects intended to benefit the University and its relationship with Latin America: sponsoring a PiLA fellow work with their NGO ILRIO, which focuses on education and leadership development and to help Brazilian students who have institutionally been discouraged from applying to American schools to successfully apply to the Ivies and other prestigious institutions, increasing the number of summer internships available to undergraduates in Brazil, and sponsoring what will become a biennial Brazil summit for Princetonians and friends of the University who wouldn't mind a bit of Ipanema or *axé* to go with their reunions.

During the days, we kept busy with a trip to the beach town of Buzios, performances by the Nassoons at city venues like the local American School, and a visit to the favela Tavares Bastos, an anomaly among the 900 plus favelas in Brazil as it has been transformed into a secure community through arms-control policies and established trust between citizens and security forces. We also visited a small hostel in the favela, inside which an ebullient woman with an infinite smile was sporting a Barack Obama shirt given to her by David Atkinson. After telling me of her dreams to see America, she pulled me aside to show me where to get the best views of the "Marvelous City", sights that juxtaposed the ragged and gritty existence of the favelas with the natural beauty of rounded hilltops stretching upwards from the cerulean seas.

Each interaction was a reminder of the uniqueness of my own Princeton years, as well as of the collective envy we possess as alumni towards successive classes that seem to experience a fuller and more internationally-focused Princeton. Another common thread we share is our intimate connection with a region of the world that lured us so coquettishly by means of a language class, a book, a familial connection, or a spring break service project. Meeting so many people who are committed to developing fabric from this thread is what excites me most about our prospects as a network for expanding our transformative relationship with Latin America.—**Mike Solis '07, PiLA's 2008-09 Human Rights Watch Fellow**

Photos from the Rio Event



Mike with Jill and another attendee

Mike with the Nassoons, in Buzios



Princetonians in Rio

Photos from the Field



Boris Spiwak, Kate Reid, and Chris Breen, PiLA Fellows in Mexico, at the beach with a Tiger Fish



Mini PiLA Reunion in Santiago, Chile: HRW Fellows past and present— Jamie Loxton '06 and Mike— accompanied by Christian Gomez '03, former Arias Fellow and past PiLA Executive Director



Jason Diggs at Wat'a, Peru