

1785 a 1880



__The period between 1785 and 1880 was marked by intense transformations in the Brazilian textile industry. The country ceased to be a colony bound by laws that favored the Colonial Pact and became the administrative seat of the Portuguese Crown, following the arrival of the Royal Family in Brazil in 1808. The presence of the Court motivated the creation of decrees in favor of legalizing the manufacture of goods, including textiles. Later, at the end of the 19th century, the national production of textiles and clothing already showed a greater degree of structure, both in the domestic and industrial settings.

Photographs by Christiano Júnior (garments of enslaved people)

In the Brazilian context, during the 18th and 19th centuries, the garments worn by enslaved people were made from the same coarse fabric, unbleached cotton fabric used to bag commodities such as coffee. The equation of Africans and Afro-descendants with trade goods can also be observed in the titles of the photographs by the artist Christiano Júnior, who, instead of identifying those portrayed by their respective names, chose to designate them solely by the labor they performed, such as “wage-earning slaves” – a nomenclature used to designate Black people who sold goods and services in urban areas.

1

[1] Wage-earning slave weaving sisal threads

__Christiano Junior | Brazil, 1864-1865 | National Historical Museum (MHN) Collection – Ibram [Brazilian Institute of Museums] | Photographic reproduction by Jaime Acioli

2

3

[2] Wage-earning slaves with empty baskets

__Christiano Junior | Brazil, 1864-1865 | National Historical Museum (MHN) Collection – Ibram [Brazilian Institute of Museums] | Photographic reproduction by Jaime Acioli

[3] Wage-earning slave – seller

__Christiano Junior | Brazil, 1864-1865 | National Historical Museum (MHN) Collection – Ibram [Brazilian Institute of Museums] | Photographic reproduction by Jaime Acioli

1785

—Publication of the Royal Decree signed by Queen Maria I ordering the closure of manufacturing factories in Brazil. The prohibition also applied to textile manufactures, with the exception of coarse-textured cotton fabrics used for bagging goods and for the clothing of enslaved people. Even with the restriction, fabrics continued to be produced, on a small scale, through home weaving workshops maintained by women in domestic settings or by enslaved people.

“

I, THE QUEEN. I hereby make known to all who see this Decree: That, having been made aware of the large number of factories and manufacturing establishments that have spread over the past few years throughout the different captaincies

of Brazil, to the grave detriment of the cultivation, farming, and exploitation of the mineral resources of that vast continent; since there is a great and well-known lack of population there, it is evident that the more the number of manufacturers increases, the more the number of cultivators will decrease; and there will be fewer hands available to be employed in exploration, ..." Royal Decree of 1785.

1808

__Enactment of the Royal Charter, signed by King John VI, which decreed the end of the Colonial Pact between Brazil and Portugal, the opening of Brazilian ports to nations friendly to Portugal, and the entry of textile manufactures from other countries.

1808

__Publication of the Royal Decree, signed by King John VI, which revoked

the Royal Decree of January 5, 1785, approved by his mother, Queen Mary I, allowing textile manufacturing activity in the Brazilian territory.

“

[...] Let all goods, produce, and merchandise be admitted through Brazilian Custom Houses, regardless of type, whether transported on foreign ships belonging to powers that remain at peace and in harmony with My Royal Crown, or in ships of my vassals, upon payment of a twenty-four percent upon entry...” Royal Charter, 1808.

Reproduction of the Royal Charter of January 28, 1808 | National Library Collection | Manuscripts Division, Río de Janeiro

1858

—Installation of the first sewing machine store in Brazil, inaugurated

by Singer in the city of Rio de Janeiro, which triggered the advancement of textile production processes in the country.

Oral history by Maria de Lourdes França Camargo | Brazil, 1998 | 2'03"
| Immigration Museum Collection

TRANSCRIPTION

Museum: I'd like you to tell us a little about your grandmother, who was also a seamstress, wasn't she?

Maria: My grandmother, my father's mother, was from the countryside. From Mogi Mirim. It was her and her sister. Even her sister was Vera's grandmother. My grandmother was Vera's sister's grandmother, and they always lived together. They were widows, along with their mother. Her mother also sewed—she was my great-grandmother. So, they only made men's clothes; they didn't make women's. People from the farm would come

to have clothes made, and they did a really good job, you know! Very well sewn. But only men's clothes, both their mother and they themselves. My grandmother. They even called it a "two-piece suit" back then, because it wasn't a suit, just the two pieces: pants and a jacket. Because that's when I stopped making them—it was just two pieces. She always sewed like that...

Museum: Vests—didn't you wear them?

Maria: She did. She made them too. Vests... those simpler folks didn't make vests that often; it was more the well-to-do people. And my father's grandmother, who was their mother, sewed... she raised her children by sewing. She said that back then there were no machines; after a long time, she finally bought a hand-cranked sewing machine. Then came the floor-standing machine... the pedal-powered one... and... I said she was a divine seamstress, but she sewed by hand.

She made clothes like that for those important people, but always men's clothes, all very neat and tidy. She was very religious; she would take her sewing to finish up at the far end of the yard—that huge yard—back in Mogi Mirim, and she'd sew while praying, and so on... that quiet life of people in the countryside. And she raised her daughters sewing, and her daughters carried on the tradition too. My father was a tailor, which means that... it's a... if you look at the family tree, everyone is a seamstress”.

1860

__Expansion of Brazilian textile production due to increased import costs generated by the American Civil War (1861 to 1865) and the high demand for uniforms used by the Brazilian Army during the Paraguayan War (1864 to 1870).

1880 to 1940



__Between 1880 and 1940, the city of São Paulo underwent a rapid industrial growth driven by the triangulation between the coffee capital, expansion of cotton production, and immigration and colonization policies, which provided labor for the crops and, later, for the urban factories. At the turn of the century, the textile industries were concentrated in the Brás, Mooca, and surrounding neighborhoods. This region transformed into an area with a strong presence of migrant workers, especially Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese migrants, and most of the textile workers were women and children.

__However, throughout part of the last century, between the 1920s and 1940s, the textile world in São Paulo was transformed by new migrant communities, mainly due to the

growing involvement of Japanese and Syrian-Lebanese migrants in the textile trade and production.

__Despite the economic crisis of the late 1920s and early 1930s, building on the previously established industrial strength and adapting the sector to export growth and relative prosperity during the World War II, the textile and clothing trade expanded in Brás and its surroundings, and urban economies developed based on the increasingly rapid connection between industrial production and popular commerce.

Flood of Várzea do Carmo

Benedito Calixto | Brazil, 1892

USP Paulista Museum Collection

1887

__Inauguration of the Brás Immigrant Hostel.

Floor Plan of the Immigrant Hostel in the State of São Paulo

Immigration Museum | Apesp

1888

__Princess Isabel signed the Golden Law, which decreed the abolition of slavery in Brazilian territory.

Reproduction of Gazeta de Notícias,
May 14, 1888 | Biblioteca Nacional
Collection | Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira

1889

__Foundation of the National Jute Textile Company, located on what is now Jute Street, in the Brás neighborhood, by Count Álvares Penteado. In 1908, the company was acquired by Jorge Street.

Oral history by Rosaura Street

Brazil, 1994 | 2'31"

Immigration Museum Collection

TRANSCRIPTION

Museum: It's important to know a little about your background, too. And what did your father do?

Rosaura: My father was a major industrialist.

Museum: Jorge Street? Wow, what a surprise! I didn't know that.

Rosaura: You didn't?

Museum: He was a very important figure for the city of São Paulo, for the history of São Paulo.

Rosaura: He was. There was a young woman doing her PhD; her thesis was on my father's work, and she came here often to interview me, but she didn't record it.

Museum: Yeah, it doesn't hurt at all, does it?

Rosaura: No, it doesn't. (laughter)

Museum: I know because I did a paper on the history of the University of São Paulo, and he was mentioned, because the University actually occupied a building at one point.

Rosaura: He was in social

work here, wasn't he? In 1918 he opened the factory.

Museum: What kind of factory was it?

Rosaura: He had about three thousand workers in one that was a jute factory, and he had another one with 1,700 workers that was a cotton factory, which was the Maria Zélia, the Maria Zélia factory where all the welfare services were provided.

Museum: Can you tell me the nationality of the workers at these factories?

Rosaura: Well, most of the workers were Italian. Just the other day I was looking at some photos... there was a daycare center... there was a daycare center, a kindergarten, and a school, and the mothers—the female workers—had time set aside to come and breastfeed their children because everything was close by; it was a large area. I have a photo of them breastfeeding their children. All blond, of course... really foreign-looking.

Museum: Was your father the son of an immigrant?

Rosaura: My father... my grandfather was an engineer. He came here to build railroads, hired by the emperor.

Museum: Of English origin?

Rosaura: Of English origin and French education.”

1890

__Enactment of Decree No. 528, known as the Glicério Law, which facilitated and subsidized the arrival of European immigrants fit for work and without criminal records, in addition to providing benefits to employers who brought and employed these individuals. Article 1, Chapter I, further states that the incentives were not valid for “Indigenous people from Asia or Africa,” an initiative that was part of the whitening policies in vogue at the time.

1891

__Ratification of the first Constitution of the Brazilian republican period, which guaranteed the free exercise of any profession. Although enacted after the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888, the Constitution did not include measures for the inclusion of Black and Indigenous people in the labor market.

1893

__Enactment of Decree No. 1,566, which allowed the expulsion of foreigners who violated “public tranquility, business, and social life” and “incited acts of violence between or against the various social classes.”

1897

__Foundation, in the Mooca neighborhood, of Regoli, Crespi &

Cia, a textile factory owned by Rodolfo Crespi, which in 1909 was renamed as Rodolfo Crespi Cotton Mill.

Photograph of workers and Rodolpho Crespi at the Crespi Cotton Mill

Brazil, 1924 | No donor

Immigration Museum Collection

Photograph of workers at the Crespi Cotton Mill | Brazil, 1924 | Unknown donor | Immigration Museum Collection

1903

__Foundation of the Mariângela Textile Mill, in Brás, by the Italian businessman Francisco Matarazzo.

1907

__Foundation, in the Ipiranga neighborhood, of the Ypiranga Jafet Spinning, Weaving and Printing factory, created by the Lebanese businessman Nami Jafet.

1907

__Implementation of the Law on the Expulsion of Foreigners – sanctioned by Decree No. 1,641 –, which legalized the expulsion of foreigners from the national territory if they compromised public order, were convicted of crimes or offenses in foreign or Brazilian courts, or engaged in practices of “vagrancy,” “begging,” among others.

Oral history by Romilda

Vidal Melhado | Brazil, 1998 | 2’54”

Immigration Museum Collection

TRANSCRIPTION

Museum: Was he already married?

Romilda: No. He was single. Then he started working at that factory. My mother was also a young woman; they both worked there, met, and got married there. He worked at the same factory for 35 years.

Museum: For the Jafet family?

Romilda: For the Jafet family. He

retired from that Jafet family firm.

Museum: They were the most powerful family in Ipiranga, weren't they?

Romilda: Yeah. There were the Assads too, but it was all cousins marrying cousins, within the families. Assad, Jafet, Maluf. They were all from that era, but they married within the family. Although... getting back to it... when my grandfather came here from Spain, to Brazil, that whole Spanish family that came along—they practically all married among themselves. And my father, he was already... promised to a little Spanish girl, too. They all married... the three girls who came on the ship. Only my father married a Brazilian woman. I mean, Brazilian, daughter of an Italian... of an Italian woman.

Museum: Did your mother work, too?

Romilda: Yes, she did.

Museum: In the same industry as your father?

Romilda: She quit.

Museum: Until her first child was born?

Romilda: Until hers first and second children came along—I only have one sister. Two daughters. When I was six years old, she started... she went to work and left me with families to take care of me. My whole family... the women always worked.

Museum: I'd like to know if the wages they paid back then, for a factory worker, were enough to live a decent life? Was it enough to support the household?

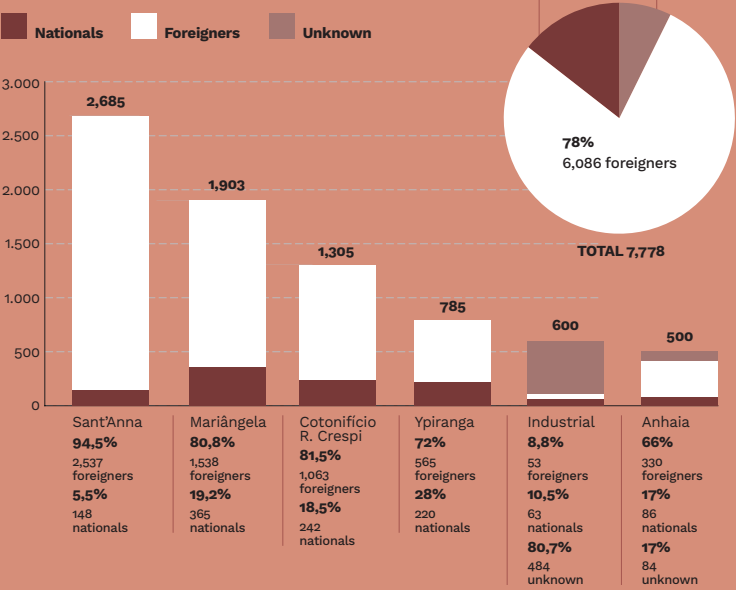
Romilda: To keep the household going... My mother always says that my father always helped out with music. That when I was born, she thought my birth was going to be difficult, and he used the extra money from music to save up enough to pay for the... back then there were no hospitals. It was the midwife, as they say, right? And... but everything went well, the midwife charged a small fee, that little

bit of money was left over, so he put a down payment on a little house. And he kept paying the mortgage. And so, one after another... he bought a little house, then bought another one with my mother always working. When I turned 15, I went to Casa Cosmos and my mother left, stopped working.”

1911

Textile workers in 1911

Bulletin of the State Department of Labor, year I, no. 1 and 2. São Paulo, 4th Quarter of 1911



1917

__The first massive general strike that paralyzed industry and commerce in São Paulo and was joined by more than 50,000 workers – at the time, 10% of the population of São Paulo – who demanded an end to degrading working conditions, a wage increase, and a reduction in working hours.

__The strike began at the Cotonifício Rodolfo Crespi textile factory, with 400 workers, mostly women, walking off the job. The movement gained greater support with the assassination of the Spanish shoemaker Francisco José Martinez (1896-1917) by the São Paulo police, while he was participating in the general strike in front of the Mariângela factory in the Brás neighborhood.

1917

__The creation of the Maria Zélia Workers' Village by the industrialist Jorge Street was one of the first

workers' housing projects in Brazil, intended for the employees of the National Jute Textile Company. The complex combined housing, work, and social services, reflecting models of industrial organization and control over workers' lives.

The Cardinal Archbishop of São Paulo, Dom Duarte Leopoldo e Silva, celebrated the inaugural mass and blessed every corner of the village, including the chapel (Chapel of São José), in a ceremony that brought together politicians, industrialists, and guests | Vila Maria Zélia, 1918
| *A Vida Moderna* newspaper

Reproduction of the newspaper
***A Plebe* | July 21, 1917**
Unesp Digital Library

Workers on strike in front of Cotonifício Crespi, 1917 | Photo by Edgar Leuenroth/Unicamp

1919

__Creation of the Bresser Socks factory by the Italian businessman Fiore Feola, in the Bresser region.

Bresser Socks Report (reproduction)

Brazil, 2004 | Donated by João Aparecido Feola | Immigration Museum Collection

Bresser Socks Sales Record Book

São Paulo, 1936-1938 | Donated by João Aparecido Feola
Immigration Museum Collection

Bresser Socks Receipt Book

Brazil, no date | Donated by João Aparecido Feola | Immigration Museum Collection

1927

__For the first time in the entire national territory, the employment of children under 12 years of age was prohibited by Decree No. 17,943-A, which also forbade night work

for adolescents under 18 years of age, as well as the employment of children and adolescents in hazardous or unhealthy activities.

Reproduction of the newspaper

A Gazeta | São Paulo, August 2, 1927

(Year XXIV, no. 6,449) | Hemeroteca

Digital Brasileira Collection

Fundação Biblioteca Nacional

1932

__Foundation of Sinditêxtil – General Spinning and Weaving Industry Union of the State of São Paulo, consolidating the employers’ organization of the sector in São Paulo, representing the interests of the spinning and weaving industry.

1932

__Decree No. 21,175 established the professional ID card, later renamed the Work and Social Security Card (CTPS), becoming

an instrument for regulating labor relationships in Brazil. The document began to record employment relationships, job functions, and workers' rights, consolidating social protection measures at the time.

1934

__The 1934 Constitution expanded labor rights and social protection guarantees for workers, in addition to providing for the creation of the Labor Courts, which were effectively established in 1939. The constitutional text also incorporated measures aimed at regulating labor relationships in the country.

Health record of tailor Antonio Kaupa

Brazil, 1932 | Donated by José Kaupa
Immigration Museum Collection

Immigrant citizenship certificate of Betija Lutens

Brazil, 1939 | Donated by Orestes Nesti
Immigration Museum Collection

1940 to 1990



__Beyond the Great Depression at the turn of the 1920s to 1930s, which led to a decrease in textile industrial activity, among other sectors, in the city and the country, it was between the 1940s and 1990s that the textile sector underwent a major reorganization that structured the subsequent context.

__In the mid-20th century, the fragmentation of the large textile industry and regional industrial restructuring began, while a new wave of internal migration took hold, coming mainly from the Northeast of the country. In the following decades, smaller textile manufacturing businesses grew, and a new micro-industrial model of sewing workshops

was established, scattered throughout the eastern and northern zones of the city, especially from the industrial axis of the Brás-Mooca region, boosted by the increase in informal labor and new regional and global textile commercial networks.

Arab immigrant's shop on Rua 25 de Março | Brazil, 1954 | Reproduction from the book 'Eis São Paulo' (1954)

Aerial view towards Mooca
Brazil, undated | Museu da Imigração Collection

1943

—The Textile Agreement established agreements between industrialists in the sector and the Federal Government amidst the context of World War II. The following year, the Industrial Mobilization Law subjected the textile industry to the so-called “war regime,” suspending labor rights and imposing

grueling workdays that, in São Paulo, could range from 13 to 20 hours a day.

1943

__Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT)

1967

__The 1967 Constitution, enacted during the military dictatorship established after the 1964 coup, consolidated measures restricting political freedoms and labor rights. Among other things, it limited the right to strike and expanded the mechanisms of control over trade unions and workers' movements.

Employment record of seamstress Marta

Brazil, 1971 | Donated by the Inspectorate of Migrant Workers – Dais/SPS
Immigration Museum Collection

Employment record for tailor Erasmio Joaquim da Silva

Brazil, 1971 | Donated by the Inspectorate

of Migrant Workers – Dais/SPS |
Immigration Museum Collection

**Oral history by Annita Concetta
de Caro Santos** | Brazil, 1998 | 2'
Immigration Museum Collection

TRANSCRIPTION

Museum: And after that school, did you go to another school, or not?

Annita: No... then I went... because I was telling Vanda... it was like this... back in the day, parents didn't really insist that their children go to school. My mother used to tell me: — 'If you don't want to study, you'll learn something.' So... I thought... and I learned a trade. It would be either dressmaking or knitting, you know... So, I went to learn dressmaking, but, as for dressmaking, I didn't like sewing, I never did. To this day, I don't like sewing. So, I went to work at... I wasn't even old enough, but my mom managed to get me a job at Casa Cosmos—it was a store... it was a men's clothing store... on Right Street...

Museum: A shirt shop?

Annita: Yeah. Men's clothing. Like Minelli would be today—a really good store back then, really good. So I went to work there.

Museum: As a seamstress?

Annita: No. I went to work in the stockroom. But, I... funny thing, I didn't take anything too seriously back then; I was 12 or 13 years old, I didn't even have ID, and back then you had to get a document from the court to be able to work, so my mom went and got permission from the judge for me to work, and I stayed there for two years, and everyone liked me back then because I was very cheerful, very... well... everyone liked to call me Anitinha, Anitinha...because I was really little. I was one of the youngest people in the store. I worked in the stockroom, but I had access to the sales floor. So everyone liked me. Then... I didn't want to stay there anymore, so I quit."

Oral history by Sang Ag Kang

Brazil, 2002 | 2'43" | Immigration
Museum Collection

TRANSCRIPTION

Museum: Were Koreans already getting into the garment business back then, or not yet?

Sang: One or two families were doing it, on a small scale, but they didn't know how to make patterns, you know. But since my father is a tailor, he got into it easily and they started making shirts, you know. So, back then, as Koreans, we had to do everything from home just to survive in the early days of immigration. We'd take clothes, go door to door, knock on doors, and sell them. Some people made good money, you know, and that was enough to get by.

Museum: Who sold them? Did you help sell them too?

Sang: No.

Museum: No?

Sang: Well, all Koreans, the women who took them from my house, you know, I mean, my parents were manufacturers, direct manufacturers, not wholesalers, just manufacturers. So people would pick them up from my house and sell them. Some people would take a van full of clothes and sell them in the countryside, you know, they sold in the countryside to Japanese people because back then they didn't speak Portuguese very well, so they spoke Japanese, so going door to door, most people visited Japanese households, because the ladies spoke Japanese, you know, because my parents' generation spoke Japanese fluently. So, they sold to Japanese households, they didn't really sell to Brazilians, you know. So, I mean, they made embroidery, like, a factory for, like, embroidered blouses or blankets, and, well, that's how we started with immigration.

Museum: Did your mother help

with the embroidery too?

Sang: Of course, right? Back then... Not embroidery —I was the only one who did embroidery, you know, just me, because of the machine, right? I did it, I sewed, I sent it out, my mom sewed sometimes, you know, and my... And then my dad started working in the garment business too to... I think immigration started the garment business around there...”

Oral history by Mario Kang |

Brazil, 2002 | 3’03” | Immigration
Museum Collection

TRANSCRIPTION

Mario: Well, since my father was an engineer, he knew what he was doing. He had a handbag factory—he used to, anyway—and he was a metalworker. So when we got here, we started making handbags for women, because he knew what he was doing; he was an engineer, you know. We started that in ’66, you know, it was a handbag

factory, and we worked there for about two or three years. Then my father-in-law—my current father-in-law, you know—was a friend of my dad's. He had this clothing factory; he made shirts too, and he had a really hard time buying interfacing. So he'd say to my dad, 'Hey, why don't you make collars?'—the part that goes on the interfacing, the part that goes inside the shirt—because he knew my dad could operate the machines and knew how to do that kind of thing. Because when he went to buy it, he'd place an order and it would take two or three months to get it, so my father-in-law said, "No, this business will work, you can do this," so my dad went with my father-in-law to that factory—that factory still exists, it's our competitor today—it's called Herkulizada, right? He went there and walked in...

Museum: Herkulizada?

Mario: Yeah.

Museum: Is it a very large interlining factory?

Mário: Yes, so my dad went there, he looked at the machines, he went two or three times, and then he started manufacturing this machine. Yeah, my dad is really good at this kind of thing, so much so that we have our own factory in Fortaleza now, you know, with lots of machines—actually, 90% of our machines are made by us, because these machines don't exist here; there are only European ones, which are really expensive, you know, back in '60, '69...

Museum: Did you develop, did you develop that machine?

Mário: Yes, we copied it, you know, we saw the machine, my father—we couldn't take a camera, so we photographed it with our eyes, and he made that machine...

Museum: Hmm.

Mario: You know.

Mario: Yes, I made collars; we started in '69, interfacing, exactly. Back then I'd buy interfacing and just make collars—the part that goes inside the shirt. I still make those, and now...

Museum: Do you still make them?

Mario: Yeah, so in '69 we started this interfacing business in, how long did we work there? Four years in São Paulo. Back then the government launched a Sudene program—actually, it existed back then, right?—with tax incentives when you were going to build a factory, and also income tax exemptions, you know. So I took a chance, you know, and went to Fortaleza. I went to Fortaleza in '74. 'Why Fortaleza?' Well, when I got married—when did I get married? Oh, '73. I got married and went on my honeymoon. By then I was already working with interlining; I know Brazil, all of Brazil, selling collars, you know, 'end-to-end'".

1980

__Law No. 6,815, known as the Foreigner's Statute, addressed the presence of migrants under the broad and imprecise logic of "national security," which allowed the dictatorial regime of that time to restrict rights and expand control mechanisms over international migrants. Excerpt from the transcript of the Foreigner's Statute:

“

Article 65. Any foreigner who, in any way, threatens national security, political or social order, public tranquility or morality, or the popular economy, or whose conduct makes them harmful to national convenience and interests, shall be subject to expulsion”.

1988

__The 1988 Constitution, known as the Citizen Constitution, expanded

labor rights and social guarantees in the process of re-democratization of the country. Among the measures incorporated were limiting the workday to 8 hours and extending maternity leave to 120 days.

1990 to date

__Starting in the early 1990s, Latin American migrations asserted their presence in the city of São Paulo through the strengthening of their migratory, labor, and affective networks. In addition to the Bolivian, Paraguayan, and Peruvian communities, the Chinese and Korean communities have also become increasingly present in the textile sector, mainly in the center and eastern zone of São Paulo.

__During this period, while sewing workshops became the predominant mode of textile production in the

regional context, internationally, transnational production networks were consolidating, accelerating textile production and marketing. At the same time, the high-level of job insecurity in the textile production chain worldwide, in the country, and in the city of São Paulo leads to a proliferation of debates and action fronts against labor exploitation in the sector.

1990

—During the government of Fernando Collor de Mello, regulations such as Provisional Measure No. 158 – later converted into Law No. 8,032/1990 – were part of the process of economic liberalization and reduction of import barriers in Brazil. In the textile sector, the increased entry of foreign products intensified competition, leading to productive restructuring, the closure of traditional factories, and transformations in forms of

work and the circulation of goods.

**Oral history by Eidi Poletti | Brazil, 1998
3'31" | Immigration Museum Collection**

TRANSCRIPTION

Eidi: [...] But here, I think—I don't know—there are a lot of people who've been very successful in the clothing industry. I wasn't that lucky because I was in the clothing business for 17 years, and after the Collor Plan, it all just went down the drain. And Brazil is a country that I believe has never been through a war, but we're always as if we were in a post-war period, always in crisis, and we have everything here. We wouldn't have to be in this crisis all the time, you know, starting over. Starting over from what? We have everything here. Right... but, I see that... and my life has always been like this, a fresh start. And with that invasion, with that opening that Collor brought about... there was a massive influx of imported products that we didn't

have; we garment manufacturers here in Brazil didn't have the means or the machinery to be able to open up that... to compete. Now, I believe measures will be taken, you know, since there's been a major decline in both the textile and garment industries. Chinese labor costs are practically negligible. So you buy "American" goods—in quotes—because everything is made overseas, and you buy them very cheap, very cheap. Our currency, relative to the dollar, was a little higher a while back... which I think is all in quotes, which I think it never really was... but that led me to start buying goods abroad and reselling them here, you know, so that... that part was a little frustrating, you know, but it was the way I found to survive, because in that process my creativity, you know, gave me something that I think was really important: a deeper understanding, it opened me up more to what I do, you know...".

2000

__Starting in the 2000s, the Dawn Flea Market, in the Brás and Pari region, consolidated itself as one of the largest centers of popular commerce in São Paulo, bringing together thousands of workers, shopkeepers, and street vendors from distinct parts of Brazil and neighboring countries. Closely linked to the textile and clothing industry, the flea market has also become a space marked by the presence of migrants and the dynamism of the city's informal and popular economies.

Traders open their newly renovated stalls at the Dawn Flea Market in 2013 | São Paulo, 2013
Photo by João Luiz | Secom

2000

Miniature sewing machine (Alasitas)

__Since the 2000s, in São Paulo metropolitan area, Bolivian Andean

communities have held the Alasitas Festival, a festival of Aymara indigenous origin, in which abundance and prosperity are celebrated. Each person buys miniature versions of what they wish to materialize during the year. Suitcases, bags of cement, pots and pans, food packages, university diplomas, and much more, all in miniature to be blessed and multiplied. Small sewing machines – both domestic and industrial – are also sold at the Alasitas Fairs in D.Pedro II Park, among other places, purchased by those who want to prosper in the textile sector.

Miniature sewing machine

Unknown location, 2026

Immigration Museum Collection

2003

__Update to Article 149 of the Brazilian Penal Code, which broadened the definition of work analogous to slavery

and began to consider as a crime not only the deprivation of liberty, but also the subjection of workers to degrading conditions, exhausting workdays, debt bondage, and forced labor.

Oral history by Wilge Gualberto

Brazil, 2007 | 1'53''

Immigration Museum Collection

TRANSCRIPTION

Museum: And did you enjoy working as a seamstress?

Wilge: No, but it was the best option I had, because of my papers, because of other things. I didn't speak the language very well yet, things like that. So I learned as I went along, but the work was really hard; it was every day, from 8 a.m. to midnight.

Museum: From eight in the morning until midnight?

Wilge: Yes

Museum: And did they pay well for the pieces you sewed?

Wilge: It was like working on commission; it was piecework.

Museum: It was piecework?

Wilge: It was. So, you work... if you want to earn more, you work more. But we worked until midnight; it was really grueling. After two years, I couldn't take working that way anymore, so I quit.

Museum: Regarding documentation, during those two years, how did you handle it?

Wilge: During those two years, no... It's like in Bolivian or Korean households—we didn't need documentation because it's live-in; it's... we worked there, slept there, ate there—everything was right there in the house. But, for example, if we had to rent a house or something like that, documentation would be an obstacle, and we couldn't have any obstacles. That's why the best option was to work...".

Oral history by Rudecindo Mendez Marupa | Brazil, 2014 | 1'13" |

Immigration Museum Collection

TRANSCRIPTION

Rudecindo: [...] when I arrived in Brazil, it wasn't a very good experience; I worked for three months in a sewing workshop, but unfortunately they didn't pay me for those three months. I worked from 5 a.m until 10 p.m sewing; I learned to sew because I had never sewn before—this is curved, this is straight... and they gave me ten reals a week so that... How do they say it here?

Museum: Living allowance?

Rudecindo: No... [unintelligible]

Museum: Transportation voucher?

Rudecindo: They give... in Bolivia they call it an “antecipo”

Museum: Oh yes, an advance payment.

Rudecindo: Yes, ten reals they gave me, weekly

Museum: A voucher that...

Rudecindo: Yes, a voucher, that's right.

They gave me a ten-real voucher, but for three months I received thirty reals”.

2010

__Creation of the National Solid Waste Policy through Law No. 12,305, which established guidelines for the integrated management and environmentally sound management of waste in Brazil. The legislation introduced principles such as shared responsibility for the product life cycle, encouraging the reduction, reuse, recycling, and proper disposal of waste, including waste from the textile sector.



Article 4. The National Solid Waste Policy brings together the set of principles, objectives, instruments, guidelines, goals, and actions adopted by the Federal Government, alone or in cooperation with the States, Federal

District, Municipalities, or private entities, for the purpose of integrated management and environmentally sound management of solid waste.”

2013

Initiative of the Si Yo Puedo Collective in Kantuta Square, 2013

Si Yo Puedo Collective Collection.

Oral history by Verônica Quispe Yujra
Brazil, 2016 | 1’12”

Immigration Museum Collection

TRANSCRIPTION

Verônica:[...] So, at first, that was my intention for the project. To promote democratization, democratize information, and help people understand that they can attend public education here. However, the main group that started coming to the program wasn’t the children who were already studying here, or the young people who were already studying here. In fact, it was the newcomers—

young people and adults who had just arrived—who would say to me: ‘Wow, I work as a tailor, but I used to be an electrician. Can I be an electrician here?’ And that’s when I realized that yes, you can, but what do you need to do that? Then there’s the whole ordeal of ‘oh, do you have documents?’ You have to get your papers. “Oh, do you speak Portuguese?” No. “Then you’re going to have to learn Portuguese.” So I created the Portuguese course. “Oh, you have your papers now, you speak Portuguese now, do you have a work permit?” “No.” “Then now we’ll work on the work permit.” So, as the range of activities expanded, I realized that these young people and adults also needed help to enter the job market or resume their studies. And that’s how this group took shape—it’s now a small collective that continues to be called the ‘Si, yo puedo!’ project”.

Oral history by Rocio Quispe Yujra

Brazil, 2025 | 48”

Immigration Museum Collection

TRANSCRIPTION

Rocio: [...] So I said, ‘No, I’m going to work with my mom.’ So, I’d leave home, go to my mom’s house—even though I was pregnant—or go to Kantuta.

Then, Padre Bento Square became a point of contention, and after some discussion, the Kantuta Market moved to Kantuta Square, and I remember that I started working at Kantuta Square, selling my mom’s clothes.

My mom sold everything—she sold sweaters, ponchos, aguayos; she had a handicrafts stall and a cereal stall at the Kantuta Market. And so, I would stay at the handicrafts stall, and I would be there every Sunday selling”.

[...]

Rocio: [...] Verónica founded the collective *Sí, Yo Puedo!*, which is dedicated to promoting access to education, that is, where we shared this information based on our experience as migrants, or as Aymara and Quechua

indigenous people present in this square [Kantuta Square] or who frequented the square, so that they could enroll in technical schools or higher education institutions here in São Paulo, because at the time she started the project, many in our community thought that school was private or that we didn't have the right to access these courses. So, this ended up keeping us working in sewing workshops, without an education, and unable to enter the formal job market. So, I think all my experiences led me to understand, in some way, that if it was good for me, it was good for other people, so we would meet on Sundays to provide this guidance to the community”.

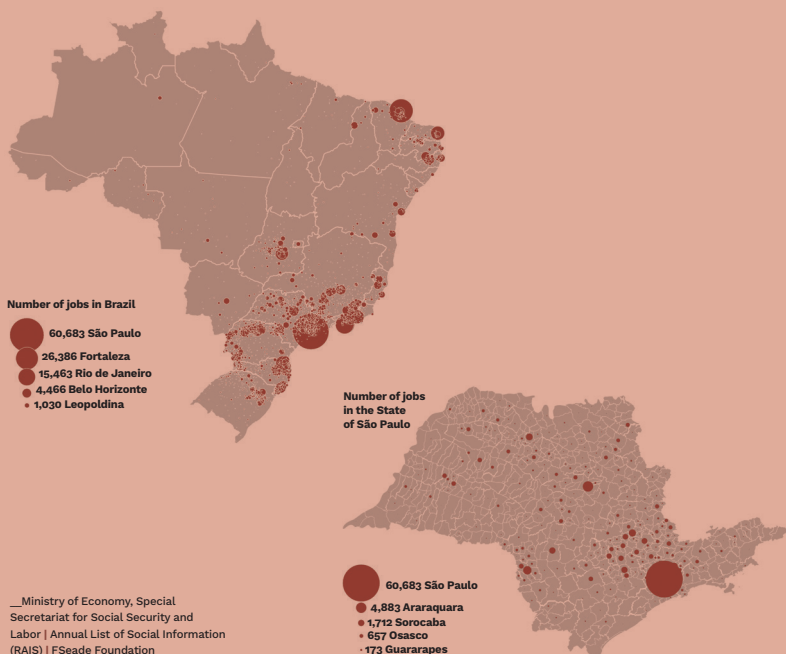
2017

—The Migration Law (Law No. 13,445) was enacted, replacing the old Foreigner's Statute (of 1980)

and guiding Brazilian migration policy based on the principles of human rights. The new law guarantees greater protection for the rights of migrants, refugees, and stateless persons, recognizing migration as a right, and not as a matter of national security.

2017

__Distribution of employment in the garment/apparel sector, by municipality, 2017



2024

__Municipal Law No. 18,148 was published, authorizing the creation of a partnership and cooperation program for the reuse of textile waste in the city of São Paulo. The legislation provides for the reuse of scraps, fabrics, and fibers discarded by textile production in vocational training courses and initiatives aimed at generating income for low-income and socially vulnerable populations.

Oral history by Rocio del Pilar Bravo
Shuña | Brazil, 2016 | 2’21”

Immigration Museum Collection

TRANSCRIPTION

Rocio: So I think this is also an achievement of this group of women—the participation of both Angelita and myself. In a way, the strength and visibility that we’ve gained, that the Immigrant and Refugee Women’s Front has achieved in recent times, this visibility: “Look, let’s do this—these are

women from different collectives, not necessarily under the banner of an NGO, but because we're going to discuss women's issues, we're going to discuss humanized childbirth, we're going to discuss, for example, the women who work in sewing workshops, who often live alone or just with their families. And they are sometimes sexually abused inside the sewing workshops. So the precarious conditions in the sewing workshops. Just a little while ago there was a fire. Why? Because sometimes there are several families crammed into one place. So the employment conditions, the study conditions. Because it took me over a year and a half—even though I have, let's say, an education—it took me a year and a half to get my diploma revalidated. But there are other women very close to me, very close, who didn't get their

diploma revalidated. I think you know them. They didn't get their diploma revalidated. There are many obstacles to getting a job in your field. In the end, you end up underemployed. That's also a huge difficulty. Then another thing is being a woman, alone in a country with a different language, with children. And the difficulty you face in breaking out of that cycle—and I think that's what our struggle is all about, too. Actually, I don't just think so—that is our struggle”.

2025

__Inauguration of the first Textile Eco-point in the city of São Paulo, located in Brás, exclusively for the disposal of waste from the clothing manufacturing chain, such as scraps, fabrics and clothing. The equipment, operating 24 hours a day, emerged as a response to the irregular disposal of waste in the city's main

textile hub, promoting alternatives
for reuse and environmentally
sound disposal of materials.

2025

Brazil discards

4

million

tons of textile waste per year

Agência Brasil | April 1st, 2026