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### UMass Boston – Brazilian Immigrant Center Partnership

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# UMass Boston – Brazilian Immigrant Center Partnership



**Professor Tim Sieber, Department of Anthropology**

**Professor Eduardo Siqueira, CPCS & Transnational Brazilian Project, Gastón Institute**

**Professor Natalicia Tracy, Department of Sociology; Executive Director, Brazilian Immigrant Center**

## Purposes

The Brazilian Immigrant Center (BIC) does organizing, advocacy and training to reduce marginalization of Brazilian immigrants, promoting their engagement as workers & civic participants. A worker's center, BIC supports and defends workers' rights under current state & US labor laws. BIC helps workers mediate complaints with employers, and refers others for class action suits, or intervention by the Mass. Attorney General or US Dept of Labor. A special focus at present is organizing mostly women domestic workers, and BIC has a new Law and Policy Clinic, a Domestic Worker Mediation Program, and an Immigration Justice Project staffed by two full-time public interest attorneys.

The UMass faculty and staff listed above, and collaborating units such as the Labor Resource Center, UMass Labor Extension, the Anthropology Department, the Applied Linguistics Department, the Department of Community Relations, the Chancellor's Office, the Office of Community Partnerships, and the Gastón Institute have all lent their support to Brazilian Immigrant Center activities on and off campus. The campus has made some of its spaces, such as the Campus Center Ballroom, and the Ryan Lounge, available for BIC partnership activities such as fundraisers, gala anniversary celebrations, and an art show benefit for Haitian orphans. Under Dr. Siqueira's and Dr. Maria Idali Torres' leadership, the Gastón Institute has recently begun a new Transnational Brazilian Project, involving BIC, as well as universities and agencies in Brazil.

## UMass Boston & BIC MOU

An historic Memorandum of Understanding between the University and the Brazilian Immigrant Center was signed on November 9, 2012, to formalize the long-term relationship and collaborative projects in research, service, and teaching that the two institutions have shared for some time.

Present were Winston Langley, UMass Boston Provost; Luciano Ramos, UMass Boston Director of Community Partnerships; Natalicia Tracy, Executive Director, Brazilian Immigrant Center, and Lecturer in Sociology; and, Rafaela Serrano, President of the Board, Brazilian Immigrant Center. Also attending were UMass professors Eduardo Siqueira, CPCS and Gastón Institute, and Tim Sieber, Department of Anthropology, representing the lead units within UMass Boston's current work with BIC.

Memorandum of Understanding  
between the University of Massachusetts Boston  
and the Brazilian Immigrant Center, Inc.  
November 9, 2012

I. General Purpose. The University of Massachusetts Boston, an educational institution organized under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the Brazilian Immigrant Center (BIC), a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation chartered in Massachusetts, hereby enter into a partnership agreement to foster mutually-beneficial engagement and exchanges between our organizations, in the areas of research, training, and community service. The range of collaborations envisioned is very broad, involving students, faculty and staff from the university, and staff, directors, and community members from the BIC.

II. Principals in this Agreement. For the University of Massachusetts Boston, the lead units in this partnership are the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, and the Department of Anthropology, College of Liberal Arts. For the Brazilian Immigrant Center, the Executive Director and the Board of Directors, supported by staff and volunteers, will represent that organization in all planning and agreements. The overall partnership will be facilitated and supported by the university's Office of Community Partnerships, of the Division of Government Relations and Public Affairs. At the university, the lead units may extend the net of collaboration within the university to include other relevant units in specific projects and initiatives, and the Brazilian Immigrant Center may enlist collaboration of other community partners, who serve the Boston area immigrant community, to carry out the goals of this agreement.

III. Objectives. The more specific objectives of the partnership agreement are the following:

A. Establish effective university-community partnerships to facilitate research endeavors that benefit both the university's research and training functions, for its own faculty and students, and also address the need at the community level for information, training, and policy-relevant research data that address the concrete needs of the community. The partnership will provide university faculty and students with the opportunity to translate theory and research into practice, especially to use their education to further the organizing of the Brazilian immigrant community in order to promote more empowering and socially just integration of immigrants into the economic and political life of the Commonwealth.



## Civic Engagement Training

**BEYOND LEGISLATION: THE POWER OF THE INDIVIDUAL** Professor Terry McLarney of the College of Public and Community Service during early 2013 has offered two different 4-hour trainings at UMass Boston to activists from the Brazilian Immigrant Center and allied organizations, including the Massachusetts Coalition for Domestic Workers, the Immigrant Worker Center Collaborative, SEIU-Local 615, Dominican Development Center, Matahari, Jobs with Justice-Massachusetts, and the Brazilian Women's Group. **Goal:** To train community organizations' staff in the ins and outs of the Massachusetts legislative process, so that they could learn ways to actively participate in shaping new laws for the Commonwealth, including the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights.



## Conclusion/Next Steps

- The UMass Boston/Brazilian Immigrant Center partnership has been a vital and long-term one, that has engaged many individuals and units of the university, and that has benefited the community in many productive ways, as well as the university.
- An important new development is the new programming and outreach initiative of the Gastón Institute, the Provost's Office of International and Transnational Affairs (OITA), and the campus in general, toward the Brazilian community.
- We anticipate increased research activity by UMass Boston personnel in partnership with the Brazilian Immigrant Center in the near future, and expect this research to serve the mutual needs of the university and community.
- The goal is to draw more faculty, students, and staff into partnership activities, through establishment of a formal internship program for UMass Boston students, and more campus outreach to the Brazilian and wider Portuguese-speaking community.

## Collaborative Research



A Social Profile of Brazilian housecleaners in Massachusetts: A collaborative research project funded by the Sociological Initiatives Foundation. Despite the prominence of domestic work for Brazilian women, no careful studies have ever been done of the overall social conditions of work and life for housecleaners in Massachusetts. Many Brazilian housecleaners are now playing a leadership role in the grassroots movement for domestic worker rights in our state, as well as nationally, and their work-a-day realities as housecleaners are often overlooked when compared to other domestic workers, such as nannies and caregivers. Our research question is: What are the working and living conditions of Brazilian housecleaners in the major Brazilian communities of Massachusetts, and from what working conditions do they perceive come their most serious workplace problems? Photos show 10 Brazilian housecleaner community researchers undergoing training by BIC Executive Director (and UMB Lecturer in Sociology) Natalicia Tracy at UMass Boston on March 23, 2013.

## Student Internships

During 2012-2013, the Brazilian Immigrant Center has served as a site for internships for UMass Boston students, connected to their studies at the university. These are also an element in the University's Transnational Brazilian Project, sponsored by the Gastón Institute. Recently, UMass Boston CM student Lucas Walter has worked regularly with BIC's Immigrant Justice Project attorney Schuyler Pisha, and CLA Psychology student Patricia Buzelli helped represent the BIC at the Friends and Family Community Health Fair at St. Anthony's parish in Allston.



Lucas at a UMass Boston class presentation on domestic workers, and Patricia at the local health fair in Allston.



## UMass Boston at BIC

