



## THE ABOLITION OF MISERY: 19TH CENTURY CHALLENGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The author presents a historical panorama on slavery in São Paulo and the crisis that led to its late abolition in Brazil, based on national historiography. To do so, the text starts from a Brazilian patriotic vision that emerged almost a century earlier, in the nineteenth century, at a time of equally remarkable political crisis and socioeconomic transition. The analysis is focused on the last decades of the Empire, when a generation of reformist intellectuals emerged, highlighting the thinking and trajectory of the brothers Rebouças, André and Antônio.

**Keywords:** Abolition. Misery. Empire. Intellectuals. André Rebouças. Antonio Rebouças.

### 1 Introduction

The historian is often "out of place" when dealing with contemporary political issues, especially when it comes to a foreign Brazilian scholar as is my case. At the same time, I have always believed that all the people of the world have the right to hit and err in the conduct of their own political life and their public practices. Being an American, with an election ahead, I seek to reflect humbly as our example shows that wisdom and political balance do not go in parallel with the levels of wealth, education, or power of a particular country. After receiving the invitation from Dr. Julio Pinto to attend this conference, I found myself having doubts about how to address the Brazilian political crisis and the recent projects of social change, as well as reflecting on projects for the future of this Brazil that announces itself. Following my intuition, the most correct now would be to resort to the example of my Brazilian advisor, whose presence in my life dates back to the year 1974. I was 21 years old when I met her, still a graduate student at Amherst College. The same teacher would later serve as a tutor in my PhD thesis at Yale University, defended in 1985. Even today I see how his work exerts a great influence on my thinking about Brazil.

Born in the city of São Paulo, Emilia Viotti da Costa, today counting her 89 years old, earned her place among the great names of historiography arised in Brazil when published, in 1966, the book "Da Senzala à Colônia" (1966, 2012). A brilliant study of slavery in Sao Paulo

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and the crisis that led to its late abolition in the country. Emilia Viotti was part of a notable generation of academics from São Paulo University – USP, having been among the 57 retired teachers in a compulsory and arbitrary manner by the military regime in 1968 (ADUSP, 1979). In her specific case, suffering a military investigation process that led her to leave the country destined to the United States in 1970. In the later decades, if the discipline of history in Brazilian lands went missing with her absence, it is necessary to observe that her intellectual presence at Yale has caused an extraordinary impact on the deepening of Latin American studies among Intellectuals of the northern hemisphere. In this sense, although decades after her retirement from Yale in the years 1990, her legacy and influence can be measured in the realization that five of the top ten postgraduate programs in History of Latin America in the United States are headed by academics who worked with her.

It should be emphasized that the generation of Emilia Viotti witnessed in her adolescence the political openness that occurred after the end of the Estado Novo, emerging to its intellectual and professional maturity when the military coup broke through in 1964. In the introduction of her second book (a collection of essays on the Empire, first published in Brazil in 1977 and later rewritten by her in English), Emilia explained that her inspiration, since she invested in rethinking Brazil from the nineteenth century, emerged from an attempt to understand the military coup. In particular, the fact that support for the breaking of democratic rules that received expressive coverage of Brazilian society has originated exactly in the liberal and illustrated public opinion (VIOTTI DA COSTA, 1977, p. 17; 2000, p. xvii).

At the time, the coup was justified on the basis of allegations of corruption and wielded under the inheritance of getulista demagoguery, carried out by people who distrusted the adverse electoral results and, in particular, the growth of the PTB. They believed that they could trust a state institution (in the case of 1964, the Army) to thus "fix" the country, modernise the economy, end the addictions of a corrupted political system and thus ensure a better future for the nation. Therefore, they were willing to accept the violation of democracy and to subject the society from which they were part of to the tutelage of the military. Likewise, the immense majority of Members of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Senate, together with the Judiciary, gave blessing to the deposition of President João Goulart, to shortly thereafter, in 1968, to be obliged to recognize their mistake in face of the promulgation of the AI-5. For me, in this scenario, the most interesting example is still the case of Carlos Lacerda, the most famous and paradigmatic figure among the civil scammers: a ex-leftist and self-proclaimed liberal right-hand man whose greatest historical merit was to publicly assume, in 1967, his error of judgement by supporting the coup (called "revolution" in 1964).

## **2 Brazilian patriotic vision**

Here, however, I want to deal with what I understand as a patriotic Brazilian vision that arose almost a century earlier, in the nineteenth century, at a time of political crisis and also notable socioeconomic transition. It was about a reformist attempt to diagnose the challenges of then, aiming at the construction of a Brazil for all, in line with the immense capacity of a country with such a size and, human and natural resources. In the last decades of the Empire, more than 125 years ago, a generation of reformist intellectuals arose — lawyers, doctors, writers and engineers — among whom many came to prominence as the stars of politics and the intellectual and cultural life of the First Republic. Within that Panorama, I highlight the thought and trajectory of a lesser known figure in Brazil than, I believe, it should be — especially within the academic environments still mostly occupied by whites in a multiracial country. I do not believe that it is enough that their names have been honored on an avenue in the city of Sao Paulo and, in Rio de Janeiro, locals are transiting through a tunnel that bears his and his brother names. It is necessary to take a closer look at who they were and what they represent historically. I speak of André Rebouças and his brother Antônio, both engineers of great talent, with grandiose aspirations and professional, intellectual and cultural prominent lives. Both Brazilian and mulatto, in the dusk of Brazil Empire.

Antony died before the abolition of slavery, and Andre silenced himself a few years later. He was disillusioned with the arrival of a Republic that he understood as opportunistic and enslaving in its origin, and which legitimacy he never accepted. This explains, in part, why the Rebouças brothers had not occupied the space to which they deserved; not only within the Brazilian intellectual and political landscape of the First Republic, but also in the history of Brazil as a whole. Although the Rebouças have repeatedly been claimed by black activists, the most common was the use of their names by whites interested in attesting to the ideals of a racial democracy: a man auto identified as a mulatto, but with "white soul", given his intellectual background and his European experience. Finally, a person whose importance stands out in the intercrossing of his genealogy with his peculiar status, such as a fly in the milk of the ruling class, excessively white at the time of slavery.

Others know Andre's name as an abolitionist and possibly as a "social reformer", but the vast majority of Brazilians, including intellectuals, know little about his life trajectory and the development of his thinking. Fortunately, a lot is documented, with plenty of details, in his abundant professional writings as an engineer, teacher of the Escola Polytecnica of Rio de Janeiro or even as a militant journalist. There are 19 notebooks with journals written between 1863 and 1889, in addition to nine volumes of correspondences (1873-1891), plus correspondences and notes made in exile, until his death in 1898 in Africa ((REZENDE CARVALHO, 1998, p. 17).

### 3 Rebouças

My impression is that our understanding of Brazil will be incomplete — as it was suggested in five Brazilian and foreign books published about Rebouças between 1985 and 2005 — until we understand the tearful vision of this grandson of a Portuguese tailor who married a black woman from Bahia, freed from slavery in the 18th century, and whose son, father of André, was an important figure of the independence of Brazil in the state of Bahia in 1822, later after becoming a politician of some prominence in the Empire (SPITZER 1989, 2001; GRINBERG, 2002). Educated in Rio de Janeiro and graduated as engineers by the military school in 1860, the Rebouças brothers spent almost two years traveling and doing advanced studies in Europe. Back to Brazil, they join campaigns in the War of Paraguay, although Andre has always hated militarisms, coming to defend the extinction of armies and navies (SANTOS, 1985). Both were, in the decade of 1870, the most well-prepared Brazilian engineers of the Empire. Professor and journalist, André became in the years of 1880 one of the most important abolitionist leaders in the country (REZENDE DE CARVALHO; SANTOS, 1985; SPITZER, 2001).

Although from an elite family — not exactly for financial wealth, but mainly for the nature of the relationships gained — this Brazilian descendant of enslaved Africans felt outraged, as a Brazilian patriot, with the fact that the name of the American continent was inextricably linked to "the monster of slavery". He would say, "but it is true that generations of European pirates and looters, who valued only gold and silver, destroyed the indigenous population of the New World, and then introduced Africans as human cattle." All those who benefited from this exploration history, he declared, should regret for these crimes, "for having imprisoned, in the most beautiful continent created by God [one of the] oldest and noblest races of the Old World" (SANTOS, 1985, p. 104).

In the years 1880, Rebouças was one of the main articulators of the abolitionist movement and invested much of his modest fortune to finance a newspaper that stired the flames of the first social movement of masses with truly urban bases. Imbued with a democratic vision of the future for Brazil, Rebouças attacked not only slavery, but specifically its origin in the institution of the landowner monopoly, which he left, according to him, "millions and millions of Brazilians without even a gore of land to lay the poles of a hut". In all his writings, this great social critic has always emphasized the inescapable connection between racial oppression, the "unjust, wicked and immoral" monopoly of land and economic exploitation. "We must level this beautiful Brazil," he said, in order to accelerate the advent of a "Rural Democracy" that would allow this vast country to attack the misery in which most of the Brazilian population was found, including even those who were legally free, but enslaved, according to him, by the "forced salary" of whimsy wages (SANTOS, 1985, p. 104, 144).

Talking about petty employers, Rebouças condemned the "[Brazilian] aversion in paying fair wages and... [the refusal of] the "equal distribution" of wealth, derived as he says, from

"slavery and servitude" that had long been practiced in Brazil (SANTOS, 1985, p. 359). To Andre, the horrors of hunger, disease, and premature death were "the sons of Misery; they are the fruits of parasitism of the higher races for several centuries, going over the work, leaving people to wither by their tiredness and hunger "(SANTOS, 1985, p. 93). For this Brazilian patriot:

The extinction of slavery led the problem of abolishing misery to the first Plan. The slavish was a great machine to produce proletarians and wretches. It was hit that made possible, for three centuries, the most monstrous territorial monopoly ever seen on the surface of the globe. This monopoly has produced urban misery, without ground, air and light, accumulated in pigsties; begging during the day and sleeping at night in human dunghills, it produced the rural misery, without land, without salary, without any compensation, without the slightest idea of fair and equitable distribution between capital and work (SANTOS, 1985, p. 349).

For people who today claim themselves to make part of the "liberal" or the "new right" ideology, such words of André Rebouças — prophetic in my understanding — would sound as a "cheap" and simplistic leftism. Something they would see as typical of MST or PT in its heroic phase, with its demagogic division of the Brazilian people between masses and elites, dominated and domineering, victims and victimizers. But Andre Rebouças was not, by any means, what we might call a man of the left, even in his moments more exalted. Before, he was a man of a certain aspect of liberalism — based on free work and anchored in the small estate — that did not thrive in slavish Brazil, dominated by patronage and aristocratic ideals. The evolution of his thinking is even more impressive when it is known that this adept of Adam Smith was a businessman who not only idealized, but tried to practice "free enterprise" in an empire dominated by political maneuvers, patronage favoritism and large corruption. He enthusiastically supported free trade, putting himself against the power centralization protectionism during the empire, since the state, in his vision, "has natural organic aversion against companies and entrepreneurs in the realization of works of public utility" (SANTOS, 1985, p. 108, 540, 542; REZENDE DE CARVALHO, 1998, p. 131, 140, 157). Brazil Empire, according to Rebouças, was a place where "the happy are [the] politicians; the unfortunate public servants; [and] the rest belongs to an anonymous class whose rights and whose guarantees are impossible to define "(REBOUÇAS 1988, p. 358).

Rebouças believed that the growth of Brazil's productive forces would be critical to the country's future. And his proposal, in the years 1870, was the adoption of the manly and democratic *Yankee* model in the organization of a capitalist society in Brazil (REZENDE DE CARVALHO, 1998). After ending slavery — well before Brazil — the mythology of American society founded on elections made with greater public participation than in other countries in the Americas or Europe, was based on an idealization of work (including manual works) as dignified wealth source of society. It was a utopia of the self-made man which Rebouças took for himself, coming from an American society that has always refused aristocratic distinctions, preaching the mythology of the social mobility of the subalterns (VIOTTI DA COSTA, 1977; REZENDE DE CARVALHO, 1998 ). The ideal of Rebouças was not the monarchical England, so beloved by

the Brazilian pseudo-aristocracy, but the United States constituted of commoners, that judges people according to their capabilities and their actions of practical results. His liberal heroes were more Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln than the aristocratic liberals of England, or even the French thinkers where liberal ideals came out "of Napoleon's Terror and militarism" (REZENDE DE CARVALHO, 1998, p. 157, 185; SANTOS, 1985, p. 513).

In the understanding of the historian Maria Rezende de Carvalho, the practice of Rebouças as an engineer was, in addition to its technical competence, based on a cosmopolitan vision, combined with an ideal of "associativity among autonomous individuals" (read "private companies") and "a radicalized and heroic individualism" (REZENDE DE CARVALHO, 1998, p. 131, 120-121). The engineer hated the lethargy, inertia and routine of a centralized system in the court and its comes and goes from politicians, incapable cabinet medallions who, in his opinion, failed to stimulate innovative initiatives or even think the country as a whole. However, a decade of activity has left the engineer disillusioned. In all, Rebouças has launched 13 projects — from railways, docks and water and sewage systems — but only two have left the paper: the Customs docks and the Rio docks (REZENDE DE CARVALHO, 1998; SANTOS, 1985). In addition to another success — although partially, once posthumously, has been put aside after almost having happened in its time — with the planning of the water supply system for Rio de Janeiro. When it was eventually built, they adopted the Rebouças proposal that included the capture of water from Tinguá in the Baixada Fluminense (a place I had the honor of visiting with a group of young students very recently) and that still today continues working, although closed to public visitation (SANTOS, 1985). Among the countless defeats he suffered, we can credit them, for the most part, to cheap politics of the time, but also to the racist attacks he suffered, such as when an anonymous poem published under the title "Pai feitiço e pai quimbombo" (REZENDE DE CARVALHO, 1998, p. 65).

In conclusion, Rebouças argued that the Brazilian legislator, motivated by "envy and jealousy", had no use to put the country "on the rails", becoming most of the time more as "an instrument of debasement of men and of social disorganization" (REZENDE DE CARVALHO, 1998, p. 131, 169). Frustrated his attempts to contribute to the country's future material, Rebouças began to occupy himself fundamentally of his activities as a teacher and journalist (REZENDE DE CARVALHO, 1998; SANTOS, 1985). In the decades after the sad end of the Radical Reconstruction in the United States in 1877, which left the ex-slaves to their luck in the southern states, Rebouças recognized in his idealization of the United States a misconception of youth. Coming even to write in his journal that it was a "huge Catargo that terminates indians, blacks, and italians as if they were naughty dogs" (REZENDE DE CARVALHO, 1998, p. 64).

In his research, he tried to deepen the analysis of the obstacles that limited the implementation of the liberal ideal always defined by him as "the dogma of the Democratic Trinity: freedom, equality and brotherhood" (SANTOS, 1985, p. 104). He cited the classical motto

of the French Revolution, but refusing Jacobin solutions and without adopting socialist formulations. For him, the solution of the Brazil problems would be the mass distribution of private properties for the landless, which increased in larger numbers. In this way, Rebouças believed that we would see the family and national income increasing, nurturing the patriotism of the masses in what he understood as an agrarian society and violently unequal (REZENDE DE CARVALHO, 1998; SANTOS 1985).

To Rebouças, the Aurea law of May 13, 1888, which happened "without iron, without fire, and without blood", was the result of the "evangelical abnegation" of the abolitionists. "After all we were able to conquer, one by one, the militarism, the parliamentarianism, the theocracy and the monarchy" and the abolition was received "in the greatest expansion of joy and contentment; among shouts of joy; in a delirium of enthusiasm, that ten days of party could not satisfy... Jubilee of redemption and reparation; of freedom and equality as the human family have never seen!" (REBOUÇAS, 1988, p. 78). He was also brilliant in his controversy against the slaveholders, demanding compensation for the loss of their private property:

There is no compensation possible and if they want to do, let's then search by force, to give it to old depleted man, let's dig the graves to deliver the murdered children to the extorted mothers; let's seek virginities to give them to the children who were savagely raped in the early hours when they barely opened their eyes to love. Farmers ask for money — black people ask for stolen life" (SANTOS, 1985, p. 101).

A year after the end of the "tri-secular crime" of slavery" (SANTOS, 1985, p. 350), Rebouças got furious at the arrival of a Republic full of "vulgar ambitious and displeased slavocrats", as well as unfair monarchists (SANTOS, 1985, p. 94). Supporter of the "Popular and Democratic Monarchy" conceived by the abolitionist Joaquim Nabuco, he condemned the new order as a:

Selfish, plutocratic and oligarchic republic: generated by spite, hatred, anger; by the fury of vengeance; by the ambition of command and power; by the rash of tyranny and despotism; by the vile covetousness of money; by insatiable parasitism over unhappy races; over Africans and over Chinese; over the Brazilians themselves, perverted by misery and subservience; over "caboclos" and hicks; over residents and owners; once commensals, national guards, electoral supporters, assassination agents, farm servants; ready to die and kill, on the nod of lieutenant-colonels and feudal barons of the slaver territorial aristocracy; of the powerful element of rural property (SANTOS, 1985, p. 93).

Explained his extreme skepticism regarding the new political order since "it was not only the exploitation of the black people that was inhuman and atrocious; the whole mechanism in which the *Powerful Element of Rural Property* worked was immoral and wicked; entirely feudal and barbarian". Everyone, he said, knows that it was "easier to democratize a king or a queen than an assembly of opulent owners" (SANTOS, 1985, p. 98).

André Rebouças was not the only intellectual of the late nineteenth century who spoke about the falsehood and moral and social failures of the First Republic, feeling betrayed in his

hopes after abolished the slavery. In the introduction of his book on the Empire, Emilia Viotti, in 1977, quoted the words of literary critic Silvio Romero of 1893, in which he denounced the elites at the time, accusing them as incapable of founding in Brazil "a free democratic republic". He spoke of his "disdain for the people, declaring them incompetent to make the choice of their political representatives" in a "disgraceful and extravagant attempt" to divide the nation into two groups: "on one side the privileged, possessed of the lights and moral dignity, on the other hand the inept and addicted, incapable of any correct politic, and who need an "eternal tutelage". Writing thirteen years after the coup of 1964, Emilia noted that "the fact that these words enunciated in the early days of the Republic can be endorsed by a contemporary radical reveals that, despite the profound transformations that the Brazilian society went through in the twentieth century, some fundamental problems were not resolved "(VIOTTI DA COSTA, 1977, p. 16-17).

#### **4 The future, the present and the past**

To make a different future, as the American novelist William Faulkner said, it is necessary to recognize that the past is not dead and not even passed; it stays alive in the present. Seen as a whole, the leadership of Brazil has always remained — from colony to independence, from slavery to freedom, from Monarchy to Republic, from Dictatorship to New Republic — in the hands of the ruling classes and the illustrated minority that served their interests. Brazil still remains deeply marked by the powerful authoritarian traditions nourished by 350 years of African slavery. The country's dominant class has been incredibly successful in protecting its privileges and in conserving its extraordinary concentration of wealth, keeping Brazil in the third worst placement among 150 countries in terms of income distribution. Brazilian capitalism, even today, exists within a network of clientelist practices, which in turn finds itself within a transactional political system with little or no respect for the public good. In this, nowadays there is no difference between the world of the bachelors of politics and that of the judiciary. At this present moment of bedlam about corruption in the country – a phenomenon that is part of the Brazilian system for centuries – it is important to open the debate beyond the obvious, to ask deeper questions about the structural origins of the lack of coherence in party politics and systematic dishonesty in the treatment of public goods.

In his classic work of 1948, Victor Nunes Leal made scathing remarks and currently valid on "the multiplicity of spurious alliances" in the most recent elections; the fact that captions are only "labels intended to meet the technical and legal requirements of the electoral process"; and that politics is a game based on "the use of money, public services, as usual process of partisan action" in a "confusing zone that mediates between legal and illicit, or penetrates into the field of delinquencies" (LEAL, 1948, p. 177-178, 23). Even today, political commitments in Brazil "are not assumed to be based on political principles, but around of concrete things" in an exchange of excuse bargains between the Executive and the Legislative (LEAL, 1948, p. 24).



There are people in Brazil today who preach the end of corruption in the country through a messianic Judiciary, with parliamentary, police, and legal persecution of the "evildoer" present on the agenda. But Leal, future member of the STF and hated by the military regime, acknowledged that "the taint of corruption, vertebrate by the scholars of our institutions, crosses the entire [Brazilian] history with the relief of a mountain range". Generation after generation, according to him, critics attributed "the defects of our representative regime to purely or predominantly political (or moral) order factors... [and] almost always deviated from the deeper economic and social factors, that were and still are responsible for "the intrinsic distortion of our representation". He insisted that the solution would not come through the "improvement of legislation", the mobilization of the judiciary or the old and still repeated motto of the moralization of public life. For him this ended in most of the time in the old "orderism" that manifests itself in the persecution of opponents: "for friends bread, for enemies stick" (LEAL, 1948, p. 174-175, 177, 183, 23-24).

The deeper roots, according to Leal and in line with Rebouças, can be found in the fact that they are "legitimate heirs of the colonial system of the great agricultural exploration... [and] the legal liberation of the work did not come to a profound change in this framework, dominated, still today, roughly by the large property and featured [...] for the subjection of a gigantic mass of salaried, partners, squatters and small owners in relation to the small powerful minority in relation to their dependents" (LEAL, 1948, p. 183). Even today, in a highly urbanized country, the traits of inherited inequality can be seen in an authoritarian culture that is reverse to equality, where the dominant classes had not (both at the time and today, I conclude) "the slightest idea of an equitable and fair distribution" of wealth (SANTOS, 1985, p. 349).

Although André Rebouças addressed the problems of Brazil with astonishing clarity, the tragedy of his life and the oblivion to which he submerged reside in the fact that in Brazil of that time there was no organized counterpoint to the power of the rich and wealthy. Despite his youthful enthusiasm for the French Revolution, Rebouças was an advanced theoretical reformer, but without shock troops. Within the precarious situation in which he was in relation to the elites of the slavery society of the Empire, it was impossible to devise or implement an abolitionist policy of mass-class struggle without creating difficulties to achieve the desired goal of the end of the institution. As he publicly assured, saying that "we never got involved with the enslaved" and refused the example of the members of the abolitionist movement that "spotted as estate-eaters, as incendiaries of sugarcane, as drivers of the Cubatão firings" (PESSANHA, 2005, p. 68).

That doesn't mean that Rebouças was a traitor, nor a conciliator. It was rather a fierce critic of the famous emancipation laws that were being praised as examples of advanced and paternalistic attitudes of the ruling class. For him, the liberation of the slaves through the Law of the Free Womb and of the Sexagenarians was a false emancipation. The first was criticized as "a

failure and limp law, sad and draggedly executed." And the second was described as a "petty, shameful, infamous law", which would kill a large number of slaves (PESSANHA, 2005, p. 55-56). From his point of view, the so-called enlightened reforms of jurists and "statesmen" were not sufficiently radical in their proposals.

## **5 The inheritance of André Rebouças**

The struggle for the construction of a more egalitarian nation, with a decent and honest government, would extend throughout the twentieth century, with some progress having been achieved with the recognition of the "social debt". First on the part of the State at the time of Getúlio Vargas, then with the Brazilian citizen Constitution of 1988, formulated after the end of the military dictatorship. The latter having been an important milestone in the recognition of the noble goal of abolishing misery and extending welfare and happiness to the majority of the population. Fortunately, we can say that the 21st century Brazil has finally managed to alleviate hunger and misery with the arrival of Lula in the presidency, putting a ex-factory worker and union leader at the center of the political game at a national level, together with its politically organized social allies. Even if those reformist groups were, as is notorious, politically minority in the midst of a parliament dominated by the same members of the historical oligarchies, oriented to the maintenance of their petty and physiological interests, besides the shady interests of powerful economic groups of agriculture, industry, and the financial market.

In fact, what was finally achieved in this first decade of the 21st century - namely: the "Bolsa Família", the appreciation of the minimum wage and other initiatives in view of the increase in social mobility, clearing the misfortune of the poorer - should have happen long before, but measures have never been implemented in this way. The interests of the majority of the landless, homeless and, as a whole, hopeless people were ignored (FORTES; FRENCH, 2012). The creation of a more decent Brazil — which does not necessarily means a socially and racially fairer, or even more honest country — represents true progress and an important victory for the humble and hardworking classes. In this sense, I share the judgement concerning the "Era Lula" offered by the English historian Perry Anderson, formerly known to Brazil since the beginning of the years 1960: "As a period of Brazilian economic policy, it can be seen as contiguous to that of Cardoso, a development from the same matrix. [But] seen as a social process, on the other hand, [...] marked a noticeable rupture" with the past of Brazil. Alert to the ambiguous anthropological dynamics of the electoral policy, Anderson points out the colossal specificity of the Brazilian case: "The gross electoral weight of poor people, opposed to the gross weight of economic inequality, not to mention political injustice, makes Brazil a distinct democracy from any society in the north, even those in which class tensions were once more accentuated, or the labor movement harder. The contradiction between these two magnitudes hardly began to process" (ANDERSON, 2011b, p. 12; ANDERSON, 2011b).

The resistance to such changes that we witness is the price paid for such advances. That has little or nothing to do with the usual slogans, void of meanings, that pray for the "fight against corruption". This is not, and nor should it be, in any way a surprise, given the price paid by Getúlio Vargas, who died mistreated, isolated and without the necessary support to avoid the anti-democratic political maneuvers he had suffered. Maneuvers that in the time of his second government were given in the form of a crusade against him, accused of appearing in front of what was described as a "sea of mud" of corruption. It is a task for people of goodwill to bring Brazil's attention back to these profound and historically rooted aspirations, especially at times when the self-esteem of its people is so shaken. It will not be easy, nor fast, to restore confidence in "a new Brazil", where "another world is possible"; surely it will be necessary to count on the joint effort of all to not let the country fall into the emptiness of politics.

## 6 Conclusion

I'll finish with a Yankee observation of a black American citizen whose trajectory was inspiration for the Yankee vision of André Rebouças. Frederick Douglass was born in a slave condition, but he escaped. He fled to the north of the country where he became a journalist and articulator of the American abolitionist movement. After the Civil War he became an important figure in the Republican Party, as well as ambassador to his country. In a 1857 prayer, Douglass recognized that the path ahead would be difficult, but he emphasized that the key to the issue resides in the "fight". "The history of the mankind progress shows that all the concessions made so far to their august claims were born from the serious struggle. [...] If there's no fight, there's no progress. Those who declare themselves in favor of freedom and still demote mobilization, are men who wish to harvest without plowing the land, who want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the terrible roar of its many waters. The fight can be moral, or it can be physical, and it can be both physical and moral," and concludes, "but it has to be a struggle. Power grants nothing without demands. Never did and never will" (DOUGLAS, 1979, p.1853).

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