Brazilian laborers (ganhadores) strike against ID tag and tax legislation, 1857

**Time period notes:** Slavery was legal in Brazil at this time.

1 June
1857
to: 9 June
1857

**Country:** Brazil

**Location City/State/Province:** Salvador, Bahia

**Location Description:** The city of Salvador was known as Bahia during this time

**Goals:**
To prevent the implementation of the 1857 Bahia City Council legislation which required ganhadores to register, pay for, and wear an ID card in order to work.

**Methods**

Methods in 1st segment:

- 063. Social disobedience
- 106. Industry strike
- 135. Popular nonobedience
- 140. Hiding, escape, and false identities

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 063. Social disobedience
- 106. Industry strike
- 135. Popular nonobedience
- 140. Hiding, escape, and false identities

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 030. Rude gestures
- 032. Taunting officials → taunting strikebreakers
- 063. Social disobedience
- 106. Industry strike
- 135. Popular nonobedience
- 140. Hiding, escape, and false identities

Methods in 4th segment:

- 030. Rude gestures
032. Taunting officials → taunting strikebreakers
063. Social disobedience
106. Industry strike
135. Popular nonobedience
140. Hiding, escape, and false identities

Methods in 5th segment:

030. Rude gestures
032. Taunting officials → taunting strikebreakers
063. Social disobedience
106. Industry strike
135. Popular nonobedience
140. Hiding, escape, and false identities

Methods in 6th segment:

030. Rude gestures
063. Social disobedience
135. Popular nonobedience
140. Hiding, escape, and false identities

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

037. Singing

Classifications

Classification:
Defense
Cluster:
Economic Justice
Human Rights
Group characterization:

- ganhadores: enslaved and freed Africans who transported cargo and people in Bahia

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:
Ganhadores: enslaved and freed Africans who transported cargo and people in Bahia

Partners:
slave owners
merchants

African women and youth

External allies:
The Commercial Association

Bahian Provincial Legislature

Involvement of social elites:
Joao Lins Cansacao de Sinimbu- president of the providence of Bahia
Firmino da Costa Menezes- scribe and attorney

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:
- African women and youth
- Joao Lins Cansacao de Sinimbu
- Merchants
- The Commercial Association
- slave owners

Groups in 2nd Segment:
- Bahian Provincial Legislature

Groups in 3rd Segment:
- slave owneres (exit) ganhadoran slaves (exit)

Groups in 4th Segment:
Groups in 5th Segment:
Groups in 6th Segment:
- Firmino da Costa Menezes

Segment Length: Approximately 1.5 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:
Bahian City Council

The Bahian newspaper: "Jornal da Bahia"

Nonviolent responses of opponent:
Not known

Campaigner violence:
Campaigners stoned ganhadores who submitted to the council legislation by wearing their ID tag and breaking the strike

Repressive Violence:
Not known

Success Outcome
**Success in achieving specific demands/goals:**
4 points out of 6 points

**Survival:**
1 point out of 1 points

**Growth:**
3 points out of 3 points

**Notes on outcomes:**
The campaigners were able to change the legislation set forth by the Bahia City Council. They eliminated the tax on 
ganhadores but were still required to wear an ID tag and submit a recommendation.

During the 1800s, the slaves of Brazil held uprisings and rebellions that led to the governments’ careful construction of methods 
of controlling black Brazilians. After one revolt in 1835 the Bahian Parliament passed legislation to control the “ganhadores.” 
Ganhadores were freed and enslaved African males who transported goods and people through the city of Bahia, now known as 
Salvador. Part of this legislation required that the ganhadores pay taxes for their services. Ganhadores refused to pay the required 
dues in every way possible, including hiding, giving false names and addresses, or not registering at all. With this amount of 
opposition and civil disobedience, the Brazilian government could not enforce the legislation.

In March 1857 the Bahian City Council attempted to resolve its inability to control this segment of the population. They set forth 
legislation declaring that ganhadores needed a City Council approved permit and metal identification (ID) tag in order to work. 
Obtaining these items cost 5,000 reis. It also required that a suitable guarantor take responsibility for the behavior of freed 
ganhadores, and that the ganhadores wear the ID tag around their neck when working.

The ganhadores decided to refuse the tax on their profession. They resisted the ID requirement because clothes, hairstyles, and 
necklaces were used as powerful symbolic indications of class and social standing in African cultures. They did not want the ID 
tag to solidify their low class or proximity to slavery.

From 1 June to 9 June, ganhadores conducted a strike to prevent the implementation of the 1857 legislation. During the strike 
there was a complete slow-down of the transportation of any goods in Bahia. Without the services of the ganhadores, the 
merchants and city businesses could not operate.

The city tried to use trolleys and animal-drawn carts as alternatives to the ganhadores, but those modes of transportation were 
expensive and merchants still needed the ganhadores to load and unload the items from the carts and trolleys. Slave-owners 
refused to comply in paying the tax on behalf of their slaves. Upper class Brazilians realized that increasing the taxes on 
ganhadores would lead to an increased cost in their services and they also resisted compliance.

On 2 June President Joao Lins Cansacao de Sinimbu, of the Province of Bahia, ordered that the Council revoke the tax 
component of the legislation. The Province Legislature did not support the Council legislation. They approved of the registration 
and ID tag requirement, but not the added tax. The Council had to follow the presidents’ orders.

The strike continued six more days with the aim of eliminating the remaining regulations in the legislation. African women and 
children in Bahia supported the campaigners. African women food vendors sold their goods to ganhadores on credit during the 
strike.

After the fees associated with the ID tag were eliminated, slave owners withdrew their support for the strike and pressured their 
slaves to return to work. Some slaves began to go back to work, wearing the designated ID tags. These ganhadores were stoned 
by their striking comrades who tore off the ID tags in the process.

The media blamed the police for these incidents of violence. On 5 June the newspaper, *Jornal da Bahia*, began to refer to the 
strike as a crisis and an emergent revolution.

By 8 June, the ganhadores began to conduct business again, but they did not wear the required identification tags.
9 June the City Council revoked their March ordinance, replacing it with a tax free ID prerequisite, as well as a required, “certificate of guarantee from the official of the district in which they reside, and in the absence of this, from a notoriously respectful person.” Attorney and scribe Firmino da Costa Menezes wrote petitions for ganhadores so that they could obtain certificates of guarantee.

The novelty at this time of utilizing the strike as a strategy in Brazil made it very difficult for the government to repress campaigners. The campaigners were able to change the legislation set forth by the Bahia City Council. They eliminated the tax on ganhadores but were still required to wear an ID tag and submit a recommendation. After the strike ended, individual ganhadores continued to resist compliance by not wearing ID tags. When caught by the police they were arrested.

Research Notes

Influences:
1) 1835 African revolt in Brazil and civil disobedient response to the 1835 ganhadores legislation.

Sources:

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:
Sarah Gonzales, 27/04/2013