

## Oral History in Brazil: An Interview with Antonio Montenegro

*Alexander Freund, The University of Winnipeg*

In this interview, renowned Brazilian oral historian Antonio Montenegro recalls how he came to oral history after giving a talk about his work on 19<sup>th</sup> century slavery in Brazil at a church, where his audience of poor, illiterate descendants of slaves told him they had never heard of the laws that led to the abolition of slavery in Brazil. Wondering what kind of past poor, illiterate people remember, he began a project interviewing poor people and building a memory archives. He also describes the development of oral history in Brazil and, more broadly, in Latin America, and the journey toward the founding of the Brazilian Oral History Association in 1994.



Antonio Montenegro at the Fifth Regional Oral History Conference of the South Brazilian Section of the Brazilian Oral History Association at UNIOESTE - Campús de Marechal Cândido Rondon, Brasil, 25-28 May 2009.

Montenegro, who is a professor of history at the Federal University of Pernambuco, Brazil, received his Ph.D. from the Catholic University of Pernambuco and his Master's degree from Universidade Estadual de Campinas, São Paulo. He completed post-doctoral studies at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

In recent projects, Montenegro studied the social and political movements of Brazil in the 1950s and 1960s and coordinated a collection of interviews with 40 people who were politically persecuted during the civil-military regime that came to power in 1964. He is currently heading a project on the history and memory of the Labour Court in Pernambuco. He is a researcher and consultant for Brazil's National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), for the coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), the Foundation of Science and Technology of Pernambuco (FACEPE), and the Foundation for Research Support of the State of Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ).

His numerous publications encompass four books, including the sixth edition of book *História Oral e Memória – a cultura popular revisitada*. 6ª edição (São Paulo, Editora Contexto, 2006) as well as *História, Metodologia, Memória* (São Paulo, Editora Contexto, 2010); *História: cultura e sentimento. Outras Histórias do Brasil*. (Organizador) Recife. Editora da Universidade Federal de Pernambuco e Editora da Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso. 2008; and *História, Cultura, Trabalho: questões da contemporaneidade*. (Organizador) Recife. Editora da Universidade Federal de Pernambuco. 2011.

Recent articles include "O Sangue da Terra. Novas Perspectivas da Historiografia Brasileira," *Caravelle* (Toulouse), 2000; "Viajeros del Cielo en Brasil," *Historia, Antropología y Fuentes Orales*. Barcelona. Vol. 27 (2002); "Poder y resistencia en el sindicalismo de Brasil," *Historia, Antropología y Fuentes Orales*. Barcelona. Vol. 29 (2003); "Historia de la Iglesia Católica en el nordeste de Brasil (1960-1990)," *Historias* 59. Mexico. (2004); "Oralidad, memoria e historia: Cuestiones metodológicas," *Voces Recobradas*. Buenos Aires. Vol. 20 (2005); "Rachar as palavras. Ou uma história a contrapelo," *Estudos Ibero-Americanos* (PUCRS. Impresso). Porto Alegre. Vol XXXIII (2006); "História Política e Cultura do Medo," *Confluenze - Rivista di Studi IberoAmericani*. Bologna. (2009); "Ação trabalhista, repressão policial e assassinato em tempos de regime militar," *Topoi*. Rio de Janeiro. Vol 13 (2011).

In the article "Oral history in Brazil: an analysis of recent production," Antonio Montenegro and two of his colleagues described the development of the Brazilian oral history movement and analyzed recent (1998-2008) publications in the journal *Historia Oral* and presentations at the Associação Brasileira de Historia Oral (ABHO) national meetings. The first national meeting in 1996 saw 23 participants, the meeting in 2008 had 384 participants. Furthermore, the

meetings of ABHO's five regional chapters, one of which takes place every two years, have seen dramatic increases in the number of participants, which have reached up to 500 and even 1000 participants.

These numbers are reproduced here:<sup>1</sup>

Topic	Historia Oral		ABHO National meeting	
	Nr.	%	Nr.	%
Popular classes and cultural manifestations	42	48.8	330	15
Historiography, theory, methodology	31	36.1	401	51
Elites	13	15.1	292	34

From: Andre de Faria Pereira Neto, Antonio Montenegro, Barbara Araujo Machdo, "Historia Oral no Brasil: uma analise de producao recente," *Historia Oral* 10/2 (Jul.-Dec. 2007): 113-126, 123

Cite the interview (Chicago style):

Alexander Freund, "Interview with Antonio Montenegro, Marechal Cândido de Rondon, Paraná, Brazil, 28 May 2009," *Oral History Forum d'histoire orale* 32 (2012) Edición Especial/Special Issue "Historia Oral en América Latina/Oral History in Latin America"

---

<sup>1</sup> At 29:45 in the interview, Montenegro provided numbers from this article. This part has been deleted from the interview.