

As we met Christian people in the projects we visited, there was an obvious absence and presence of the indigenous people. The absence is noticed because people with obvious physical features of indigenous heritage do not know their specific origin. The presence is the individual's acknowledgement of a deep ancestry. The presence of indigenous people in Brazil also can be seen in the untold number of cities, communities and streets bearing indigenous names—names like, *Jabaquara, Itapoan and Tucuuruvi*.

The visit to the Indigenous Museum in Brasília, the capital city, seemed indicative of the ambivalence of the government's relationship with Brazil's native peoples. The remnant of these peoples' work was present as a collection along without recognition of the artisans. The museum exhibit was sparse, with the display consisting primarily of one collection. One drawing depicted the historical trauma suffered by indigenous people. It showed dead bodies of men and women hanged by the neck with more bodies piled all around. In this picture, a conquistador stands ready to bash an infant against a wall. He holds the infant by the feet. As a Native

Present and Absent in Brazil

BY STELLA WEBSTER



American of the United States, this drawing resonated with me, depicting the painful reality of the cruelty inflicted by the colonists.

Analogous to our own country's treatment of indigenous people, these groups in Brazil have had to struggle against termination by brute force, assimilation and legislation. One afternoon, we caught a glimpse on television of an indigenous spokesperson in native dress. The spokesperson was part of a demonstration protesting the boundary violation of land by a corporation planting eucalyptus trees.

It appears that the feudalistic system of government of 500 years has marginalized the majority of Brazil's indigenous people into poverty and continues to infringe on their rights as a people created by God.

The PW

Birthday Offering at Work

BY SUSAN MCMICHAEL

students to step into the community as pastors, teachers and social workers. Its mission has been to equip leaders for social, economic and legal reform. Students are primarily black men and women with limited incomes, descendants of slaves who came from West Africa to work in sugar plantations. Today, they passionately proclaim their Afro-Brazilian heritage through Christian study and theology.

Ecumenical in concept, ITEBA currently conducts cramped classes in a Presbyterian church. Students typically work ordinary jobs during the day and study for their diplomas at night. The curriculum at ITEBA is government standard. The Institute strives to become accredited by the Ministry of Education. Accreditation will enhance the ITEBA diploma as well as entitle students to certain scholarships and loans available from the Ministry. In order to achieve official university status, ITEBA must own the physical facilities of their campus.

We witnessed how small donations can accrue to become a significant force in the lives of others. ITEBA staff submitted a grant proposal to PW Birthday Offering

In Salvador we saw the Presbyterian Women's Birthday Offering at work. In one of the poorest regions of Brazil, the Institute for Theological Education of Bahia (ITEBA) prepares

for funds to purchase an abandoned school building in the central section of Salvador. Presbyterian Women awarded them a sizeable grant in 2004.

Global Exchange participants were privileged to walk the halls and climb the stairs of the future campus of ITEBA, purchased with the help of Birthday Offering funds. The building is in need of serious renovation. Our footsteps resounded in empty rooms. We kicked fallen plaster and debris across hollow floors. Yet, we are exhilarated in the knowledge that our mission dollars are at work. We are humbled by the energy and excitement of the faithful adherents of the ITEBA ministry who will continue to study and work for justice for their people and for all people in an unjust world.



A new building for ITEBA, purchased with the help of the Birthday Offering