

Brazilian women
Hayley Schools

It has been said that some of the most beautiful women in the world reside in Brazil. As if it was not enough to discover the now infamous Giselle, a few years ago Victoria Secret recruited and signed the young, stunning Adriana Lima, from Salvador, which sent the world a stark message of Brazilian beauty during her 2000 catwalk debut. She and Giselle are now, arguably, the most famous and typically attractive international models in the fashion industry. It has been said, that when traveling to South America, men from all over the world often squeeze in a detour to Brazil, particularly to the notoriously beautiful city of Rio de Janeiro, to marvel at its vast array of “scenery.” Well, the rumors are true.

While traveling throughout Brazil as if it wasn't enough to constantly be surrounded by unique and breathtaking landscapes; the people, particularly the women, were equally enthralling. However, I observed it was much more than mere physical appearance that set these women apart; they exude a sublime confidence, unique and native to their country. This may explain the model power-house dynamics that exist in Brazil, but it also explains how women interact and contribute to society on a daily basis. When one sees, and more specifically interacts with Brazilian women, it is easy to speculate how they achieved such success in rising up in society. What sets these women apart from their South American counterparts is shrewd and intangible confidence.

Brazil had one of the most successful women's movements in the world, which paralleled that of Europe and the United States. They were led by a strong confidence woman, Bertha Lutz, achieving suffrage in 1932, and working toward steering women away from the dominant homemaker profession and into the work force, and in

advancing general rights for women. Lutz is internationally known for her strength, confidence, and savvy demeanor, which aided her in leading a nation into the progression and advancement of women's rights. The list does not stop with Lutz. There have been many important women in Brazil's history, and many strong, confident role models for young Brazilian girls. I'm sure Brazil has its share of pop princesses and Britney Spear's running around virtually naked and anorexic, influencing young girls' theatrics and behavior. However, the women are obviously looking to more positive women, who value self-worth, over self-obsession. In modern society with communication, globalization, and the focus on media/advertising, I do not see how else Brazilian society thrives and embraces independent, confident women, and seems so much less tainted than our own. Without the pressures of being skinny, tan, and essentially perfect, women can not only occupy their time with more important things, but also improve their sense of self-worth. The women, and even society as a whole, hold a different set of values, ideals, and norms, which allow women to be beautiful, but not necessarily "perfect;" intelligent, but not undesirable; and even slightly overweight, and still beautiful. Nothing makes a bold statement more than 200 pound women strutting down the beach in nothing more than a thong.

One may think Brazilian women are beautiful and confident...so what? It is so much more than that. From what I observed, Brazilian women are comfortable with who they are. Yes, they indulge and probably inhibit many insecurities that all women face. However, because they outwardly exhibit, and more importantly self-acknowledge, both their exterior and inner-beauty, it holds utilitarian benefits. The individual has less pressure to comply with a societal mold of beauty, and society can function more

productively without a superficial, transparent façade and a trivial obsession dominating time and energy that could be focused upon something else. The ‘beauty’ of it all is that there are places of grandeur in Brazilian society for Giselle and Adriana, and the 200 lb. women on the beach.

