



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

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## 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 owners (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.

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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:

[1] Klein, Herbert S. and Vidal Luna, Francisco. Slavery in Brazil. Cambridge University Press. 2010. New York, NY  
<http://books.google.com/books?id=4hMOMtW2R68C&pg=PA112&lpg=PA112&dq=brazilian+strike+1857&source=bl&ots=anvpDBb>

[2] Reis, Joao Jose. “The Revolution of the Ganhadores’: Urban Labour, Ethnicity and the African Strike of 1857 in Bahia, Brazil. *Journal of Latin American Studies* Vol. 29. No. 2 (May, 1997) pp 355- 393.

### Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

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[1] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/mainly-or-initiated-people-color>

[2] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/included-participation-more-one-social-class>