



The Hemispheric Americas
Lecture Series presents:

Marxism and Slavery: Brazilian Communists and the (Re)making of Zumbi

A talk by **Professor Marc Hertzman**,
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Tuesday, December 2nd
4:00pm
102 Weaver

In the 1970s, black activists in Brazil chose November 20th, the date in 1695 that Zumbi died defending Palmares, Brazil's most famous quilombo (runaway slave community), for a national Day of Black Consciousness. Though the date's importance is not in dispute, the manner in which Zumbi perished remains a contested topic. Despite documentary evidence discovered more than a century ago that shows that he died fighting in battle, multiple parties continue to reproduce and disseminate a much older legend—that preferring to death to defeat, Zumbi threw himself off a cliff. This talk traces the history of the Zumbi suicide narrative and asks why that narrative remains salient and what it can tell us about the contested meanings and histories of slavery, suicide, and political self-determination in Brazil. Special attention is given to the 1910s, '20s and '30s, when Marxists seized Zumbi as a symbol of interracial class struggle.

Marc Hertzman is a historian of Brazil and Latin America with special interest in race, culture, labor, and gender. His first book, *Making Samba: A New History of Race and Music in Brazil* (Duke University Press, 2013) was awarded Honorable Mention (runner-up) for the Bryce-Wood Book Prize by the Latin American Studies Association. His next book manuscript explores the linked histories of Marxism and black politics, and the effect of both on the production of knowledge and the evolution of academic disciplines in Brazil.