

### HOST INTRO - **KAILA START**

In urban Brazil, only *gringos* follow the rules. Facing bureaucracy at all levels of society, Brazilians have developed an unofficial code called *malandragem* to wade through the tangle of laws. Sometimes it's slipping someone \$20 bucks to get your car fixed quickly and sometimes it's doing a personal favor to enroll your kid into a better school. Only *malandros*, Brazil's infamous go-getters, know how to cut through the red tape to get what they want. From the streets to high society, *malandragem* is an important aspect of Brazilian culture. Edward Sapp, Kaila Lopez, and Carlos Abarca break down what *malandragem* really means to Brazilians.

### AMBIENT

Piano practice room music

[1:45] ACT/Dan Sharp

It's definitely part of stories that Brazilians tell themselves about themselves.

### TRACK - **EDWARD START**

Dan Sharp is a ethnomusicologist researching Brazilian music at Tulane University. His office is right next to a practice room. He says a malandro is

[3:10] ACT/Dan Sharp

the life of the party, always very well dressed, is kind of a rogue and a rake.

### TRACK

Sharp says there are lots of Portuguese words to describe malandragem which don't quite translate. But they kind of mean

[3:29] ACT/Dan Sharp

Someone who's very suave, someone who gets by their wits, and can get around the rules. You might not completely trust him, but you want to have him around.

### AMBIENT

Samba music clip

### TRACK

The ambiguous malandro character originated with Samba music. Samba emerged in 1917 and was linked to socially marginalized Afro-Brazilians in Rio de Janeiro. Its lyrics saw the first descriptions of the so-called *malandro*. By the 1930s, the *malandro* was a common character in Samba music. Despite the longstanding popular presence of the malandro, Brazilians still can't decide whether or not he is a good guy.

[8:20] ACT/ Dan Sharp

I'm going to duck the question of trying to assess how he's portrayed in popular music in general because it really varies

## TRACK

According to Dan Sharp, it all depends on how you view society

## ACT/Dan Sharp

[~4:30] If you have a baseline assumption that society is unjust, then you can potentially think of the malandro as kind of a hero because he gracefully gets around the arbitrary and unjust rules.

## TRACK

On the flip side, if you think that rules are there for a reason, and that society is inherently just, then

## [5:17] ACT/ Dan Sharp

you would be more inclined to think of him as lazy and a problem.

## TRACK - CARLOS START

In some songs, the malandro is glorified while in others, they are seen as victims of an unjust government. Jose Rangel, a senior at Tulane University who studied in Salvador da Bahia, views malandragem as a necessary evil for survival, for better or for worse. His story reflects the way in which tourists and foreigners come to understand *malandragem*.

## AMBIENT

Salvador city sounds

## [1:43] ACT/JOSE RANGEL

*Uma noite, eu fiquei no “Pelourinho” no Salvador. Ai estava um menino, acho que ele tinha como oito ou nove anos. Ele estava falando, dizendo que ele tinha fome, que estava com fome. Ele tentava sua barriga. E dizia, “eu estou com fome, tem dinheiro?” Eu não quis dar dinheiro, então eu comprei comida. Eu quis dar e ele não queria, ele queria dinheiro porque ele queria comprar “o crack”.*

One night, I was staying in Salvador’s famous “Pelourinho” neighborhood. There was a young boy, about 8 or 9, who came up to me, saying “I am hungry,” as he rubbed his belly. He continued saying, “I am hungry, do you have money?” I didn’t want to give him money, so I tried buying him food instead. Despite my offer, he refused, saying he didn’t want the food because he wanted money only to buy crack

## TRACK

This child was tricking foreigners into giving him money to sate his addiction. However, malandragem extends past the streets. Rodrigo Lerner, an exchange student at Tulane from INSPER in São Paulo, tells us how *malandros* navigate the bureaucracy.

## [2:20] ACT/RODRIGO

*Se você não paga de dinheiro para autoescola, a escola de direção, você não vou conseguir sua carta. Então uma causa da pague 400 reais, mais ou menos 200 dólares, para poder tirar minha carta, que é uma malandragem, porque é ilegal, mais todo mundo faz, e eu fui, quero fazer também, eu paguei para poder tirar na carta*

In São Paulo, you have to pay a fee to get into driving school, plus an unofficial 200 dollars to get the card that says you've passed driver's ed. It's *malandragem* because it's illegal, but everyone does it. Me too, I paid for the card, but then the drivers education school I was enrolled in closed, I failed the test, and they ran off with everyone's money, including my own. I tried to be a malandro like everyone else, but I just ended up losing my money.

TRACK

While it may be rare in the States, what Rodrigo did is very common in Brazil.

ACT/CURTIS PIERRE

*Mas isso primeiro caso que um malandro existe, para burocracia.*

Malandragem exists because of bureaucracy.

TRACK

Curtis Pierre runs "Casa Samba," a New Orleans Samba School.

AMBIENT

Samba drums

ACT/CURTIS PIERRE

*Um malandro viu rápido dentro dos centros da comunidade, governo, ele viu isso rápido. Para isso, ele é muito inteligente. Para isso, ele não faz, ele vai fazer uma coisa para fazer outro caminho para pegar as coisas mais rápido.*

A malandro quickly sees inside the centers of the community and government; he is very intelligent. He's bound to do something to find a quicker way to get what he wants.

TRACK

Good or bad, *malandragem* is a necessary element of life in Brazil. Quick, clever, and morally ambiguous, the *malandro* is society's solution to the country's inefficiencies. Darting past bureaucracy and gliding over the confusing web of laws, the malandro is an inescapable character in Brazil's national story. This has been Edward Sapp, Kaila Lopez, and Carlos Abarca.