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Political Gender-Based Violence and the Struggle for Women's Political Empowerment in
Brazil

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Global Studies

by

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June 2019

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In memory of all Zuzus, Dorothys, Patrícias and Marielles.

May we honor them, may we carry their legacy on.

In gratitude for all the women I have encountered in life so far,
who inspired, taught or shared a bit of their stories with me.

To my mother, the first of them.

To my goddaughter Sophia, one of my main reasons to keep
fighting.

“Eu sou aquilo que ninguém mais acredita
Eu sou a puta, eu sou a santa e a banida
Sou a bravura e os surtos de Anita Garibaldi
Bandeira baixa ou bandeira que agita

Sou como rua, beco podre da cidade
Eu sou os filhos malparidos da nação
Sou a coragem até no grito dum covarde
O que não basta, não se entende, eu sou um furacão

Você vai lembrar quando eu te olhar lá de cima
Vai reconhecer e vai respeitar minhas cinzas”

- Mulamba. Lyrics by Amanda Pacífico & Cacau de Sá

ABSTRACT

Political Gender-Based Violence and the Struggle for Women's Political Empowerment in Brazil

by

Ana Caroline de Oliveira Moreno

This thesis discusses two specific aspects of gender-based violence – **femicide**, the extreme manifestation of violence against women and **political gender-based violence**, a very important yet unexplored form of violence that aims to prevent women from reaching positions of power or to remove them from their jobs. The research is focused on Latin America and, more specifically, on Brazil while employing a methodology of case-studies analysis and historical background. The cases of four women (Zuzu Angel, Dorothy Stang, Patrícia Acioli and Marielle Franco), who were killed by reasons related to their political and/or social leadership are linked to a broader study of how a patriarchal society with high concentration of inequality, insecurity and experiencing a conservative wave. The results show **the existence of patterns of violence committed by the state**, either by negligence or direct action and that the response - or lack thereof – to these killings rarely brings justice to the victims and their families.

Keywords: political gender-based violence; femicide; violence against women; Marielle Franco; state violence.

Esta tese discute dois aspectos específicos sobre violência de gênero - **feminicídio**, a extrema manifestação da violência contra a mulher e **violência de gênero na política**, uma questão altamente importante, porém ainda inexplorada sobre a violência que visa impedir mulheres de alcançar posições de poder ou removê-las seus trabalhos. A pesquisa tem como recorte espacial a América Latina e, mais especificamente, o Brasil, empregando uma metodologia de análise de estudos de caso e contexto histórico. Os casos de quatro mulheres (Zuzu Angel, Dorothy Stang, Patrícia Acioli e Marielle Franco), que foram mortas por motivos relacionados à sua liderança política e/ou social, estão vinculadas a um estudo mais amplo sobre uma sociedade patriarcal com alta concentração de desigualdade, insegurança que vive uma fase radicalmente conservadora. Os resultados mostram a existência de **padrões de violência cometidos pelo Estado**, seja por negligência ou ação direta, e que a resposta - ou a falta dela - a esses assassinatos raramente traz justiça às vítimas e suas famílias.

Palavras-chave: violência de gênero na política; feminicídio; Violência contra a mulher; Marielle Franco; violência de estado.

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GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN LATIN AMERICA: AN INTRODUCTION

One in every three women in the world has experienced or will experience physical violence at some point in her life (WHO 2017). One in five women will be sexually assaulted (National Sexual Violence Resource Center 2018). About 66,000 women and girls are killed every year, accounting for approximately 17 per cent of all victims of intentional homicide (Small Arms Survey 2012). These frightening statistics are outcomes of a global patriarchal structure that extends across borders, grounded in violence, sexism and the belief that women are not entitled to their bodies, choices, or full access to political and economic spaces. This worldwide state of affairs has far-reaching implications for women's status and the global fight for women's rights. This thesis confronts the question: How has gender-based violence undercut political empowerment?

Recently in the US, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos's proposals regarding Title IX would, if approved, make it more difficult and uncomfortable for survivors to denounce the crimes perpetrated against them. The US President's long history of denigrating statements about women, reinforces sexism (along with discrimination against racial, religious, and ethnic minorities). The 2017 reinstatement and expansion of the Mexico City Policy via presidential memorandum reduces women's agency over their own bodies. Recent changes in abortion laws at the state level aim to deprive thousands of women of their reproductive rights. The advance of extreme right across the world, from the blatantly sexist Jair Bolsonaro as President of Brazil to populist radical right victories in Sweden and Hungary this year, does not bode well for the cause of women's equality.

Among the many forms of gender-based violence, this work focuses on studying femicide in the political realm, a category we refer to as Political Gender-Based Violence. Through an analysis of four Brazilian female leaders in activism and politics it is possible to observe the patterns of violence they were victims of, in addition to the human rights responses to these cases local and globally.

WHAT IS FEMICIDE?

The 2018 United Nations report on gender-related killing of women and girls (UNODC 2018), released on the “International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women” (November 25th) reflects not only the worrisome data on the scale of the problem, but also the lack of consensus on what the term “femicide” means and a lack of accurate gender-related statistics—which means that exact numbers in certain regions could be far higher than can be stated for certain. The killing of a woman is “a lethal act on a continuum of gender-based discrimination and abuse,” in the words of Executive Director of the United Nations Yury Fedotov. Yet gender rights—and feminism—are still seen as a “luxury agenda” across the world.

The concept of *femicide*—the killing of a female person for reasons related to her gender—is not new. According to Brysk (2018), the term was created in the 1980s to describe targeted and serial murders associated with gender roles, such as honor killings and attacks on female migrant workers in Mexico’s border regions. In the *Encyclopedia of Gender and Society*, Bose (2009) defines “femicide” simply as males killing females because they are females. According to this author, variations on this definition include death through

selective neglect, “intentional killing,” or indeed any killing of females including those by other females.

The importance of using the term femicide, as Russell (2001) points out, is the need to raise recognition and facilitate the recognition of this specific form of violence. Russell rejects the conception of woman killing as a private and/or a pathological matter: “when men murder women or girls, the power dynamics of misogyny and/or sexism are almost always involved” (Russell 2001, 3). Femicide, in summary, is the extreme form of a continuum of the sexist terrorization of women and girls: “rape, torture, mutilation, sexual slavery, incestuous and extrafamilial child sexual abuse, physical and emotional battery, and serious cases of sexual harassment are also in this continuum” (Russell 2001, 4). When this sexist terrorism culminates in the ultimate violence, it becomes femicide.

Bose points out that the earlier well-known cases of femicide include the 16th and 17th-century witch hunts in Europe—and it is worth noting that witchcraft accusations are still used to lynch women nowadays, in rural parts of Asia and Africa (Brysk 2018: 238). In India alone, over 2,000 'witchcraft murders' have taken place since 2000 (Biswas 2016).

However, the term femicide has been used more and more in recent years, especially by Latin American feminist authors such as Fregoso and Bejarano (2010) and Talcott (2011) in its variation “feminicide” (*feminicidio* in Spanish). Defined by Talcott as the murder of women linked to racial, gendered structures of capital, militarized power and inequality, “feminicide” has a political nuance that is not necessarily incorporated by “femicide”—it includes the state’s accountability, through either negligence or action, for the death of its female citizens. The difference—in mainstream use—frequently goes unnoticed, but feminicide encompasses “the group of crimes against humanity that bring together crimes,

kidnappings, disappearances of women and girls in the face of an institutional collapse—a fracture in the rule of law that favors impunity in the face of these crimes” (Universitat de València, 2014) that in turn also comprehends “femicide”.

“Feminicide” was coined in 1994 by anthropologist and former Mexican congress member Marcela Lagarde. Lagarde (2009), as the author herself explains, went from “femicide” to “feminicide” because in Castellano/Spanish, femicide is parallel to homicide and only means the murder of women. In her formulation, feminicide redefines—and above all—re-signifies the term by incorporating a new element and placing it at the center of the debate: impunity. She affirms: "it is a breach of the rule of law that favors impunity. Feminicide is a state crime". Lagarde points out that the state has responsibility for the prevention, treatment and protection of women against gender violence and must guarantee the freedom and life of women. The absence of sanctions and punishment of murderers makes the state responsible for action or omission of feminicide and this must assume its complicity or direct responsibility.

Femicidio.net—an independent tabulation website set up by a non-profit to count and publicize femicides in Spain since 2010—affirms that the crime is manifested in times of war and peace, and it is fueled by gender inequality—not only social and economic but also legal, political and cultural. They associate feminicide with the objectification of women's bodies that empties them of their rights as "human". According to Lagarde, feminicide is linked to the feminization of poverty:

There it is—the poverty that reaches every day the majority of *latinoamericanas*, a violence whose classification has been sophisticated—

economic poverty, food poverty, extreme poverty, among others—turning misery into an aspect of everyday life. The terrible feminization of poverty is among us. The death of women and girls due to hunger, curable diseases and complications in the care of pregnancies, births, abortions, and the postpartum period still occurs in our lands. It does not abate, of course, the juridical political violence that violates the full citizenship of all women. (Lagarde, 2005: 154)

The concentration of the usage of the term femicide in Latin America is no coincidence: the subcontinent possesses a large percentage of worldwide femicide. Among the 25 countries with the highest rates of femicide in the world, 14 are from Latin America and the Caribbean (UN Women, 2017). These regions also concentrate the world's highest rates of social inequality—and inequality, in turn, is associated with gender-based violence, especially when linked to other forms of intersectional oppression. (Brysk, 2018). Brysk exposes a pattern of increasing violence rates when semi-liberal transitional countries—such as most of Latin America—are growing and embracing globalization without addressing their social inequality issues. According to OXFAM (2017), just six people in Brazil have as much money as the 100 million poorest Brazilians combined. Looking at another standard, the richest 5% of Brazilians earn the same income as the other 95%. The same OXFAM report mentions gender and racial violence as collateral effects of social inequality—due to unequal access to education, health care, safety, etc., women and people of color have fewer chances to break cycles of oppression, continuing this vicious circle of social inequality and violence.

One of the wake-up calls to study femicides in Latin America was the famous serial cases of femicides in Ciudad Juárez (a border-town in Mexico) that started in the 1990s. As one of the case investigators declared in the 2015 VICE News documentary “The Femicide Crisis in the State of Mexico”: “The facts reveal that it was not the work of a serial killer, rather of a society in undeniable decay that was murdering its own women.” The state of Mexico, as Humberto Padgett, author of *The Dead of the State: Femicide during the Mexican Administration of Enrique Peña Nieto* puts it, “has a long tradition of treating issues as situations of lesser importance [...] for example, the attitude of police, public investigators, experts is that women are murdered because they wear too short skirts, because they get involved with the wrong men, or because they worked in an environment of prostitution”.

This biased belief is not even remotely limited to Mexican territories, being a very common opinion in Latin America—women’s safety and their lives are conditioned and limited by what society considers appropriate and ladylike behavior. Any digression from these standards would normalize, if not justify, gender-related crimes. As UN Women’s Country Representative in Guatemala Adriana Quiñones affirms:

In Latin America, we have a culture of high tolerance towards violence against women and girls. You see it in the media all the time—crimes against women are exhibited with very crude images and nobody seems to care about it. Violence becomes normalized; it is seen as a part of life for women.

This high tolerance of violence against women is born out of patriarchy that benefits the other half of the population. As the Organization of American States succinctly defines it,

patriarchy is the set of discourses that defend male-controlled social, political and economic order as natural. Patriarchy contemptuously refers to “the analytical category gender as an ideology, delaying substantive equality and deepens *machismo* and misogyny, reinforcing and perpetuating stereotypes, enhancing discriminatory gender roles and a culture of intolerance that affects democratic coexistence, [and finally] obstructing the exercise of women's rights and legitimizing violence against women” (OAS, 2015:3).

In Brazil, the location of the specific case studies used in this thesis, 12 women are killed per day and there were around one thousand femicides in 2017 (Folha de São Paulo, 2017). However, there are states such as Rondônia, Ceará and Tocantins where there is not even gender distinction when willful homicides are analyzed (G1, 2018). In the meantime, some other states “admit that they do not statistically monitor femicide because of technical difficulties and lack of transparency” (G1, 2018). It seems safe to assume that the real numbers are significantly larger than the official ones. As summarized by the *Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública* (Brazilian Forum on Public Security):

Operators of the criminal justice system need to look at the death of women and know when to register them as femicides in a process that is not only technical but also cultural, since the death of women is, in a sense, naturalized and violence against women in everyday life is accepted and reproduced.

Even with limited data, Brazil occupies fifth place in the world ranking of femicide numbers, one of the main reasons to choose it as locus for this study. According to the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (GEO) of the Economic

Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), out of every ten femicides in Latin America and Caribbean, four had been committed in Brazil (GEO, 2018). This makes Brazil the worst case in the region for total number of victims in 2017, followed by Mexico. When the rate of femicide is counted per 100,000 women, however, El Salvador ranks the highest with 10.2 femicides. By most assessments, El Salvador and Honduras are the countries with the highest prevalence of femicides in the region (GEO, 2018).

In terms of geopolitics, there are also plenty of reasons for choosing Brazil: it is the world's fifth largest country in territory and total population, and the number one in Latin America for both categories; It presents the ninth biggest GDP according to IMF (IMF DataMapper, 2018) and is a member of MERCOSUL and BRICS. The country is a regional leader—to the point at which it is occasionally accused by its neighbors of regional imperialism (Zibechi, 2013)—while also being named as a frontrunner in South-South cooperation (Esteves & Fonseca, 2017), especially during former President Lula's government (2003-2011). The World Bank estimates about 28.6 million Brazilians moved out of poverty between 2004 and 2014, a result of rapidly growing formal employment, higher real wages and redistributive social assistance programs such as *Bolsa Família* (World Bank, 2016b). Nonetheless, the bank also estimates that 2.5 million to 3.6 million fell back below the poverty line of 140 Brazilian *reais* per month (about \$35 at current exchange rates) in the last two years (Trielli et al, 2017).

BRAZIL: A FEMICIDE HOTSPOT AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IT

Another peculiarity of the Brazil case is the contradiction between growing social development indicators—such as education, pro-woman legislation, and female political

participation—and the increasing rates of femicide. The advance towards educational equality is still timid, below OECD’s average in the three PISA scores (math, reading and science) and behind neighbors Argentina, Colombia, Uruguay (OECD, 2015). However, illiteracy has significantly declined in the country and schooling levels have increased in the last decade. By 2017, 95.5% of children were in school, while 85.6% teenagers attended the final years (IBGE, 2018). The country also elected its first female President in 2010, when Dilma Rousseff became the ninth woman to ever lead a Latin America country¹. Dilma was elected with thin margin for a second term in late 2014, but was impeached in 2016 (The completion of the impeachment, incidentally, has speculatively been pointed to the fact that Dilma is a woman).

Regarding legislation, the *Lei Maria da Penha* (Maria da Penha Law)—which targets gender-based violence in Brazil, with the specific aim of reducing domestic violence—was implemented in 2006, named after named after a woman who was left paraplegic when her husband tried to murder her. The Lei Maria da Penha has received international acclaim from organizations like the United Nations. In theory, Brazil has progressive legislation to protect women from domestic violence—besides Maria da Penha, a femicide law passed three years ago increases sentences when gender is identified as a cause of the killing.

Finally, another reason to choose Brazil is the necessity of speaking about women’s rights and gender-based violence during the current political climate. As Daniel Wilkinson of Human Rights Watch (2019) warns, new President Jair Bolsonaro, a former army captain, defends the dictatorship’s legacy and desires to rewrite history: in the last month of March,

¹ The list: Isabelita Perón and Cristina Kirschner in Argentina, Lidia Gueiler Tejada in Bolivia, Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua, Janet Jagan in Guiana, Mireya Moscoso in Panama, Laura Chinchilla in Costa Rica and Michelle Bachelet in Chile. I am not counting Rosalía Arteaga Serrano in Ecuador, since her presidency lasted less than 48 hours, part of a confusing episode named “*noche de los tres presidents*” (The Night of Three Presidents).

he ordered the military to commemorate the events of March 31, 1964—the beginning of the military dictatorship—which he denies was a coup. One invitation from an army high commander called the coup the “democratic revolution” of 1964. Bolsonaro’s celebration has particularly outraged those who lost loved ones to torture and murder—families that have been looking for justice for over four decades.

In January, a firestorm was set off by Damares Alves, chief of the Women, Family and Human Rights Ministry (and the ministry name is a problem by itself...) when she claimed that with Bolsonaro, Brazil enters a "new era" in which "boys wear blue and girls wear pink". In her speech during the inauguration, the minister reaffirmed that she intends to end the "abuse of ideological indoctrination of children and adolescents in Brazil." In addition, she said that "girls will be princesses and boys will be princes" (Folha de São Paulo, 2019). Evangelical Pastor Damares is also the protagonist of a 2015 video that became viral in Brazil, where she affirms that "feminists do not like men because they [feminists] are ugly". There are clear inversions of values when the leading Minister of Brazilian women affirms such things about feminists and gender ideology, besides being the author of other sexist and homophobic comments that could fill many more pages of this thesis.

In 2014, the campaign *Eu Não Mereço Ser Estuprada* (“I don’t deserve to be raped), created by journalist and activist Nana Queiroz went viral in the social medias, as a response to an IPEA (Applied Economic Research Institute) survey titled “Social tolerance for violence against women”. The study reported that 65% of respondents agreed with the statement: "women wearing revealing clothes deserve to be attacked.” Women across Brazil posted nude pictures while holding signs affirming that still, they didn’t deserve to be raped. While Queiroz was heavily threatened on social media for the campaign, former President

Dilma Rousseff showed her solidarity to the cause and to the creator (Agência Brasil, 2014) and the campaign trended worldwide.

A couple of weeks later, IPEA published an erratum to correct a mistake: the correct percentage was 26%, not 65%. Nonetheless, other questions of the survey—such as 58% of the interviewees agreeing that “If women knew how to behave, there would be fewer rapes” and 65% agreeing that “In a husband-and-wife fight, no one should meddle”—kept feminists’ alarms on and activists’ eyes wide open. As IPEA (2014) itself concluded:

Unfortunately, it would be premature to conclude, based on the updated results, the low tolerance of violence against women in Brazilian society, since the same research offers evidence to the contrary. (...) other survey questions suggest that (...) the population still adheres largely to a patriarchal nuclear family view, albeit under a contemporary, up-to-date version.

The next year, a Brazilian online campaign called *Meu Primeiro Assédio* (“my first harassment” in Portuguese) would lead to over eighty thousand posts on its first day, recounting the first time that women were harassed; most of these stories took place before their victims hit puberty. The informal operation was motivated by the exposure of an eleven-year-old girl, participant on a famous culinary reality show, which led to her leaving the program. The campaign reverberated internationally after BBC Trending translated and published the story, leading to the internationalization of the movement (#firstharassment). According to Juliana de Farias, creator of Feminist NGO “Think Olga”, there’s a strong relation between outdated traditions and current gender violence: “for a long time, which still

reflects modern behavior, it was understood that females were domestic beings, that we belonged to the household [...]. The public individual is male—who goes to work, to wars [...] and when we go out, to the streets, they understand that is a space where females shouldn't be—and if they are there, therefore they must be controlled". This distorted idea of control and superior rights is closely related to femicides, constituting in a major challenge in the Latin context. In Brazil alone, 40 thousand women were killed between 2004 and 2014 simply for being female (Villareal, 2014).

The numbers are far from ideal for the other Latin American leading countries: Colombia registered 17,715 cases of violence against women in the first five months of 2018 (RCN, 2018) and 3 femicides per day (Reuters, 2018). Argentina, a pioneer in women's rights in Latin America and leader of the *#Niunamemos* movement in 2016, one woman is murdered every thirty hours. A new study released by Mumulá (*Mujeres de la Patria Latinoamericana* or “Women of the Latin American Motherland”) revealed that there have been 216 femicides so far in Argentina this year alone (Jenner, 2018). In Mexico 6 femicides are perpetrated daily² but the Mexican Senate admitted that there are no statistics documenting the real magnitude of femicide in the country (Small Arms Survey, 2016). The Pan American Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012) report that in some countries of Latin America, domestic violence rates are over 30% (Ecuador, Peru, Colombia) with Bolivia at 52%. Since gender-related killings are often the last in a series of violent acts, a high rate of domestic violence is an indicator of a substantial number of femicides.

These numbers—and civil activism—have promoted the adoption of conventions and national legislation. While International Human Rights laws have developed a set of norms, standards and principles to achieve the full validity of women's rights, there has been a substantial transformation (Toledo Vasquez, 2009): in the first stage, international laws and treaties focused on a mere formal equality between women and men. More recently, however, legal instruments and interpretations recognize the structural inequality and discrimination faced by females which, consequently, create space for a complete review of the way in which women's rights are recognized and applied.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979, the 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and, specific to the Latin world, the 1994 Belém do Pará Convention³ are examples of that shift on special rights and protections. The Belém do Pará Convention is also pioneer in shedding a light on the specific type of aggression studied in this thesis: political gender-based violence.

MAPPING THE THESIS:

This thesis is divided in three chapters. The first chapter starts with a brief explanation and contextualization of the concept of political gender-based violence, its first appearance in an official conference, its inclusion in the VI Convention on The Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women and how this specific kind of violence was—or was not—legally distinguished in some Latin American countries. The first

³ *Convenção de Belém do Pará* or *Convenção Interamericana para Prevenir, Punir e Erradicar a Violência contra Mulher*, June 9th, 2004, Brazil.

chapter also summarizes and formalizes into tabular form a 2016 *ONU Mujeres* study of different types of political violence against women. The section closes with a discussion of one of the reasons why the topic has recently been in the spotlight, especially in the regional context: the assassination of Brazilian councilor and Human Rights activist Marielle Franco in March 2018.

Chapter two is subdivided in four sub-chapters, each one corresponding to a specific event of political gender-based violence: the murder of a female leader in Brazil. The first case portrays the life, activism and death of fashion designer Zuzu Angel. Angel's son was part of the resistance against the military regime and disappeared during a confrontation. Zuzu's fight to discover the truth about her child was the beginning of a broader resistance against authoritarianism, reaching out to international politicians and organizations and denouncing the atrocities committed by the Brazilian dictatorship. The second case is that of Dorothy Stang, an American-born, naturalized Brazilian Catholic nun who spent decades advocating for sustainable development in the Amazon and trying to protect the most vulnerable groups against the "logger mafia" in the region. Our third case is Patricia Acioli, a judge from Niteroi, who was famous for condemning corrupt police officers associated with drug traffic in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. And finally, the last case study contemplates the life and death of Marielle Franco, the most recent case—that we know of—of political gender-based violence in Brazil. This chapter aims to identify patterns of violence committed by the state against women in position of leadership, either by negligence or by action.

The third and final chapter is dedicated to the responses each one of these four cases spurred in the international community and human rights organizations. Since each one of the cases had similar endings but very different trajectories, their distinctive responses are

informative. Also, since the first and the last killings are separated by 42 years, each response is preceded by its respective historic context—since a lot has happened in terms of politics in the last half Century in Latin America, we felt it was important to link these women to the times they lived and their struggles they faced.

The final chapter also attempts to summarize how effective these responses actually were, and which underlying conditions they reveal. Within the backlash, we highlight the response of two feminist organizations in Brazil (“Geledés Instituto da Mulher Negra” in São Paulo and “Associação Filhas do Boto Nunca Mais” in Porto Velho) and trace parallels between their positions and views on political gender-based violence and the current political moment in Brazil. The fieldwork this researcher performed with both NGOs shaped this thesis in an unconventional way, almost by default: witnessing how both—specially Geledés—were constrained by ongoing political momentum and the rise of extreme right, the focus of the last chapter shifts from an exclusive analysis of feminist NGOs agenda regarding political gender-based violence to a broader response, including more actors.

While the association in Porto Velho is quickly growing (they just legally changed from a “collective” to an “association”, due to its greater reach), it is still new and figuring out how to better channel their agenda in the public sphere. Meanwhile Geledés, one of the main and most renowned black feminist organizations in the Americas, lost public space after president Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment in 2014, leaving their public seats in protest or being excluded from civil forums and government-organized events due to their anti-impeachment stance.

The methodology used in this work comprises the above-mentioned fieldwork, literature analysis and recapitulation of recent data, conventions and legislations regarding

gender-based violence in Latin America. However, the main method used in this thesis is **case-study analysis**—especially in chapter 2—which also means the use of case studies while dissecting historical context (chapter 3). The case-study approach is the most empirical and personal way to describe the trajectory of these exceptional women—and by recounting their lives and deaths as case studies, it is possible to better visualize the patterns of violence that swept them up, along with thousands of other women around Latin America.

According to Andrews, Hull and Donahue, (2009:8), the purpose of storytelling may range from entertainment to instruction, but all varieties share a similar experiential (as opposed to abstracted) approach to condensing information, seeking to involve the reader through context in order to provide a simulated experience. Case-based methods, while still an interpretive act, seek to detail concrete events and a series of descriptive facts as close as possible to how the events happened, approaching to a historical methodology (Wieviorka, 1992 apud Andrews et al., 2009)

To reduce the risks of biased conclusions, we aim to vary the sources regarding the case studies, referring to national and international news organization with different political stands, Human Rights reports from diverse organizations, and, as much as possible, specific and uncontested data. This is one of the reasons why this work relies on so many recent articles and news reports, especially regarding the case of Marielle Franco: besides being a fresh topic (the case is still being investigated as this thesis is written) most of the academic material about the case and its more complex relations with social and gender issues are still being studied—in work such as this.

On a more personal note, my positioning about the reasons behind political gender-based violence in Brazil is that this phenomenon has been enabled or caused by the state, in

patterns of violence that have persisted through decades, as demonstrated by the case studies. The last of these cases was the spark that ignited my long-time coming indignation, inspiring the conception of this research. As a survivor of violence, as a Brazilian woman, a feminist, and a researcher, I believe that the nearly uncharted theme of political gender-based violence is not only interesting and worthy to study, but extremely necessary. For the sake of women's leadership, activism and general safety, studying political gender-based violence is urgent and potentially lifesaving.

1. POLITICAL GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE:

According to Krooks and Restrepo Sanin (2016), violence against women in politics is becoming more and more recognized around the world as a tactic to prevent female political participation—especially in Latin America. The concept of political gender-based violence made its first concrete appearance in Bolivia in 2000, when Association of Female Councilors of Bolivia (ACOBOL) assembled at a conference at the Chamber of Deputies, to discuss reports of harassment and violence against female leaders in rural municipalities (ibid.). Eight years later, political gender-based violence is a form of violence officially classified in Latin American countries such as Bolivia, Mexico, Costa Rica and Peru, even if only properly legislated in Bolivia.

One main intent of this type of violence is to prevent women from running for office and/or interfering with the exercise of their mandates, ultimately discouraging and shortening their political careers. In other words, it is a type of violence exercised before, at the beginning, during and/or at the end of a woman's political term, aiming to destabilize the female politician or activist and lead her to quit (Grazziotin, 2017). International Amnesty (2018) highlights that the biggest aim of gender-based violence punishes women for trying to occupy a men's space and restrict their participation there. In summary, it attempts to push women back to the private sphere, excluding them of public agency and bringing new voices and ideas to the table.

The Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará) of 1994, as mentioned before, affirms that the failure to ensure women's political rights (including civil, economic and social) is a violation of freedom and basic human rights. On the sixth updating of the convention (Lima, Oct. 15,

2015), convention members linked the fight against gender-based violence in politics to an increase in political participation by women, particularly in positions of direct representation, because of the adoption of gender quotas and parity and equity policies in many countries of the American continent (Grazziotin, 2017). One of the principal VI Convention recommendations was that states would approach political gender-based violence in the public sphere—by creating bills and approving laws to ensure women’s participation and safety (Cueva, Rivas and Pinedo, 2017).

According to authorities and national experts gathered in the capital of Peru, "violence and political harassment of women can occur in any space of public and political life: in state institutions, in polling places, in political parties, in social organizations, in unions, and through the media, among others" (Grazziotin, 2017).

The Organization of American States created in 2004 a special review commission to analyze how its participants were complying with the Belem Convention and how access could be improved (Brysk, 2018: 115). The Mechanism to Follow Up on Implementation of the "Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, ‘Convention of Belém do Pará’" (MESECVI) describes the original treaty as “one of its kind in the world” (OEA, 2018)—nonetheless it also stresses the Convention’s goals have yet to be fully realized, and its provisions are not fully implemented.

The Bolivian law of May 28th, 2012, “Ley Contra el Acoso y Violencia Política hacia las Mujeres” (Law Against Harassment and Political Violence against Women) is a pioneer in the subject of political gender-based violence (Ley N.243, Asamblea Legislativa Plurinacional de Bolivia) but a rare exception in a sexist continent that features a male-dominant political system. The Bolivian legal reform was trailblazer for three reasons: it

named the phenomenon, distinguishing political violence among gender-based issues; it went beyond physical forms of abuse, highlighting also psychological violence, and it developed specific legislation to criminalize these behaviors (Krooks and Restrepo Sanin, 2016). Since the term political gender-based violence is still relatively unknown and, frankly, ignored in the public space, Bolivia was a pioneer for distinguishing it among forms of violence and recognizing its complexity.

Cueva, Rivas and Pinedo (2017) assert that Bolivia's contribution has been fundamental, not only because of the symbolic significance of being the first—and so far only—Latin American country that has approved a law of this nature, but also because of the spotlight it shines on the phenomenon as a result of the strength of its organizations of women, by means of which it contributes to advancing broader acquaintance with the conceptual content, for example, establishing the differences between political harassment and political violence.

In 2013, Verónica Fanny Mendoza Frisch, a member of National Congress in Peru, introduced a bill to tackle political harassment against women⁴. The proposal was reinforced by a 2012 study elaborated by Red Nacional de Mujeres Autoridades (Renama) which revealed a 39% rate of harassment or violence towards female candidates elected for the 2011-2014 term. The law project (1903-2012/CR) is still pending approval. (Cuevas, Rivas and Pinedo, 2017).

Even though Peru has applied gender quotas for regional and local elections—at least 30 percent of applicants—the proportion of female candidates does not correspond to the

⁴ Peruvian legislators use the term “acoso” (harassment) rather than “violencia” (violence). According to Renama, the term “violencia politica” (political violence) is strongly tied to the internal conflict between the government, the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement and the Shining Path/Communist Party of Peru. Since the term is so closely linked to civil war, they differentiate it by using “acoso” instead, but with similar understanding.

percentage of elected candidates. In the 2014 elections, only 24.6% of the municipal positions were filled by female runners, while at the regional level women barely reached 23% of occupancy. Some authors point to political gender-based violence as one of the reasons for that (ibid.).

In 2016, ONU Mujeres listed the different manifestations of political gender-based violence using a study performed by the Mexican Federal Electoral Tribunal (2000), here compiled in a table:

TARGETING FEMALE CANDIDATES AND POTENTIAL CANDIDATES:	TARGETING RECENTLY-ELECTED FEMALE CANDIDATES	TARGETING SITTING FEMALE LEGISLATORS AND MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES:
Misuse of the party's budget originally destined for training women	Arbitrary substitutions	More demands than to their male counterparts, without justification.
Faking primary elections to avoid quotas	Pressure to resign in favor of their substitutes	Pressure to adopt decisions in favor of certain groups or interests
Sending female candidates exclusively to losing districts to meet quotas		Harassment to prevent them from exercising their function of supervision and monitoring of local government
Pressure to concede or not to claim the candidacy		Intimidation, threats, physical violence against them or their family including murder and rape; destruction or damage to their offices or their property
Absence of material and support		Withholding information; exclusion of sessions by means of deception or no notification of them
Assaults and threats during the campaign		Withholding payments, undue budgetary limitations
Discriminatory treatment of media communication.		Discriminatory treatment by the media of communication:

		having their personal life put into question, their sexual behavior, their appearance, their clothing, etc.
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In Mexico, however, the General Law on Electoral Crimes does not typify political gender violence, therefore it has not been an easy task for the electoral authorities to prosecute and sanction it. At the regional level, 28 Mexican states have incorporated political violence against women into one or more of the following legal systems: Political Constitution, State Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence, Electoral Law and/or Criminal Code (CNDH Mexico, 2018).

In 2017, the Mexican Electoral Tribunal published the third edition of the *Protocolo para la atención de la violencia política contra las mujeres en razón de género* (Protocol for the attention of political violence against women based on gender) in partnership with academic institutions and feminist movements. Even though the 177 page-document is seen as an advance in terms of homogenization of the concept of political gender-based violence, civil society organizations such as the Observatorio Nacional Ciudadano (2018) reinforce the need for legal reforms: “Until these types of violent acts are criminalized, women are not guaranteed the certainty that the institutions and the State are ensuring their right to participate freely and without risk in the political life of their community.” (ibid.)

There is some positive news for Mexico, though. The *gabinete* (political office) announced by Andrés Manuel López Obrador, newly elected president of Mexico will—for the first time in history—have practically the same number of men and women: nine and eight, respectively. Also, for the first time in Mexico, almost half of the 500 deputies (48.6%) and of the 128 seats (49.2%) in the Senate will be occupied by women. That puts Mexico

into a very small worldwide list—of 5 countries, to be specific—earning praise from Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Deputy General Secretary of the United Nations and Executive Director of UN Women, that classified the last elections as “unprecedented progress” (Nación, 2018). New President López Obrador wrote on Twitter that the numbers are “an advance that we must celebrate” (GOB.MX, 2018)

Meanwhile in Costa Rica, a Latin American Human Rights’ champion (Crahan, n.d.: 549), the second article of its new Electoral Code (Law 8765, 2009) includes a clause of total gender equality and alternation to assure women’s participation:

Participation will be governed by the parity principle which implies that all delegations, payrolls and other peer bodies will be composed of fifty percent (50%) of women and fifty percent (50%) of men, and in delegations, payrolls or odd bodies the difference between the total of men and women cannot be greater than one. All the payrolls of choice will use the mechanism of alternation by sex (woman-man or man-woman), in such a way that two people of the same sex cannot be in consecutive form in the payroll. (ibid.)

However, the Observatorio de la Participación Política de las Mujeres “Nosotras en la Política” (Observatory of the Political Participation of Women "We in Politics") heavily criticizes the lack of equality and violence in the political scenario costarriqueno. Ana Carcedo, the observatory’s coordinator, affirms that political parties in Costa Rica still do not respect the current legislation that establishes parity in the participation of men and women in

their ballots. The situation described is evidenced by the fact that only one of the 13 parties registered had a woman as candidate for the presidency in 2018 (Méndez Montero, 2018).

Moreover, one of the reasons that led to the creation of the Women's Observatory for National Elections is the fact that once parity was approved in 2009, the presence of women in the legislature and the executive did not increase as expected and still does not reach 50%. On the contrary, the representation of women in parliament, which in 2006 and 2010 was approximately 38%, fell to 33.3% in 2014 (Observatorio, 2018).

The Costa Rican government also presented in 2017 a new National Policy⁵ with a duration of 15 years (2017-2032). The policy, named PLANОВI, aims to promote a change in sexist culture, endorsing non-violent masculinities that enable equality, and—at the same time—tries to reduce levels of impunity, guaranteeing greater protection for women and preventing femicides (Costa Rica, 2017). It was designed, according to former minister Alejandra Mora, to attend what has been accorded in the Belem Conventions (ibid.). However, it only mentions that “another challenge of this new policy is to reduce the revictimization suffered by women in state services” (ibid.), not engaging on the topic of political gender-based violence or promising specific legislation.

The problem of political gender-based violence in Latin American was abruptly brought to the forefront in March 14th, 2018: on that date, Rio de Janeiro city councilor, sociologist, feminist and human rights activist Marielle Franco was murdered inside her car while coming back from an event supporting black female leadership. A black queer woman herself, born in a low-income community (Complexo da Maré), Franco was a point outside the curve of Brazil's current conservative political scenario: elected as the fifth-highest voted councilperson candidate in 2016, she investigated police brutality against favelas and poor

⁵ Política Nacional para la Atención y la Prevención de la Violencia contra las Mujeres 2017-2032

communities, which was very likely the reason she was assassinated. The crime was carried out with frightening professionalism and skill, showing that whoever engineered the murders knew exactly how police would investigate and exactly how to prevent detection (Greenwald, 2018).

Marielle's assassination was met with instantaneous shock and revolt on both national and international scales. Women's movements protested in the main Brazilian cities, launching the motto "Marielle Presente" ("Marielle is present" or "Marielle still", depending on the interpretation) that quickly went viral—the hashtag #Mariellepresente had over 4.8 million publications in the first 24 hours following her murder. Thousands took to the streets in coordinated protests across Brazil, and both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch condemned her death.

As stated by The Guardian journalist and Franco's friend Glenn Greenwald (2018), Marielle was targeted because of "Her relentless and brave activism against the most lawless police battalions, her opposition to military intervention, and, most threateningly of all, her growing power as a black, gay woman from the favela seeking not to join Brazil's power structure, but to subvert it." But there was also backlash. Fake news started to spread about Marielle's life, attempting to diminish or even justify her death. This process, described by the Black Feminist NGO Geledés (2018) as "grief disqualification" and "triple assassination", are also linked to Franco's blackness and Brazilian police's brutality to black people. The perfect storm of Brazilian social, political and economic problems that led to this crime was described by Shaun King (2018) as "an international human rights crisis. This is an egregious scandal". Marielle's case and her political legacy will be further addressed in the second chapter of this research.

Marielle was honored earlier this year during the 69th Berlin International Film, by director and actor Wagner Moura, while premiering his movie *Marighella*: “[Carlos] Marighella, a black revolutionary, was murdered by state forces in 1969 in his car... and 50 years later, a black female councilwoman died in the same way, probably in the hands of state agents” (VEJA, 2019). Moura walked on the Berlinale red carpet with a street sign in his arms bearing Marielle’s name. The sign is a reproduction of the one that was destroyed last October by Rodrigo Amorim, then a candidate for state deputy in Rio de Janeiro. A few days later, in the first round of elections, Amorim was elected with the highest number of votes in the state, 140,666, through Bolsonaro’s party PSL, Partido Social Liberal (ibid.).

She was also remembered at Carnival by one of Brazil’s most traditional *Escolas de Samba* (samba school), G.R.E.S Estação Primeira de Mangueira. Proposing a recounting of Brazil’s history as this year’s “samba enredo” (the theme and lyrics displayed while parading on the “Sambódramo”) Marielle was honored in the “Comissão de Frente”, the prestigious first allegory of the school that opens their parade—Mangueira brought a young woman as Franco on the shoulders of indigenous and *quilombolas* fighters. Behind them, the traditional portraits of heroes (such as princes and marshals) were gradually replaced by minority leaders during the parade. Some of the most striking moment of the parade were other homages to Franco, including an “alegoria” (one of the groups that compose the parade, between the floats) with gigantic flags exhibiting her face, besides her widow Monica Benicio’s participation and many references to her unsolved murder. A few days later, Estação Primeira de Mangueira became the great champion of the Carnival of Rio de Janeiro in 2019 and the political relevance of their *desfile* had national and international coverage.

In terms of political gender-based violence laws, Brazil is part of the mainstream of the world and of Latin America: There is no specific legislation in the area (despite advances in gender issues, such as the Femicide Law, nº 13.104/2015) and according to CTB (Central dos Trabalhadores e Trabalhadoras do Brasil or “Brazilian Worker’s Central”) and Brazilian Senator Vanessa Grazziotin (2017), political gender-based violence is still a new concept in Brazilian reality. Even though Brazil elected a record number of female candidates in 2018 to its national legislature, the country ranks last in Latin America in terms of women’s political representation and 133rd in the world (The Brazil Institute, 2019).

Nonetheless, there are more than enough reasons and cases to justify an urgent study and response toward this matter. Marielle Franco was not the first female politician targeted due to her profession and gender (aggravated by being a minority in different spectrums) and, very likely, will not be the last. This study gathers the case of other three women—Zuzu Angel, Dorothy Stang and Patricia Acioli—who were killed due the political nature of their jobs and in similar *modus operandi*.

There is an interval of 42 years between the oldest and the most recent case study. In terms of political context, there is a shift from a Military Regime to a democratic government—and more recently, to a more fragile and exposed Democracy. There is also a diversity of positions, of living standards and geographical spaces. Yet, this research aims to elucidate, there is something bigger and graver that unites the lives and deaths of these four women, among many others across the world: being silenced for daring to speak out loud and do their jobs. They were all symbols of divergence and resistance who were killed for challenging the social and political reality they lived.

CHAPTER 2: POLITICAL GENDER-BASED CASES IN BRAZIL

As mentioned in the introduction, this thesis employs the methodology of case studies to analyze the pattern of violence perpetrated against Brazilian women who dared to question the order they lived in. Whether through activism or politics, the stories of Zuzu Angel, Dorothy Stang, Patrícia Acioli and Marielle Franco have a notable common point—they fought for and worked towards what they believed it was the right thing to do, despite being constrained, censured or threatened. Unfortunately, they also paid with their lives, victims of a patriarchal, corrupt and neglected society that didn't change enough to keep up with their militancy and provide them the basic rights of life, liberty, respect, equality and security.

2.1 ZUZU ANGEL:

Zuleika Angel Jones was a fashion designer in Rio de Janeiro, becoming successful national and internationally during the 60s, promoting fashion shows in the US and mixing Brazilian folklore and the fashion trends in her work. She was mother of three children, including Stuart Angel Jones, who was tortured and assassinated in 1971 by CISA, an arm of the military regime. Stuart was listed by the authorities as missing and Zuzu started a battle with the Brazilian military government that would only end with her murder. Initially disclosed as accidental, Zuzu Angel's death on April 14, 1976, at the exit of the Dois Irmãos tunnel from Gávea Road in Rio, was only acknowledged as homicide in the late 1990s.

From 1971 to her death, Zuzu used her prestige as a famous stylist to expose prisons, tortures and killings perpetrated by the military dictatorship in Brazil. Her relative fame allowed her access to information that she gathered in a dossier and sent to the United

Nations and the US Senate. She also managed to break through security in a Sheraton hotel and deliver, in person, the documents and a handwritten letter to former Secretary of State of the United States, Henry Kissinger, who was on an official visit to Brazil. After that, she was followed, and threatened by telephone, and finally had her shop in Leblon (upper class neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro) burned down. Her activism also influenced her work as a stylist—after her son’s death, Zuzu designed a collection with red stains, weapons and caged bird patterns.

Influential, feminist, divorced, well-connected, and fluent in English, Zuzu was a nightmare for the Brazilian military regime and a challenge constantly out of their control. On one occasion, Zuzu even took the microphone out of a flight attendant’s hand inside a passenger airliner to announce that in minutes the passengers would descend at the "Galeão International Airport in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where young students are being tortured and killed." However, Angel herself insisted that “I do not have courage, my son had courage. I have legitimacy.”

Angel took advantage of her son’s dual nationality (Brazilian and American) to attack the dictatorship, asking for help from American personalities such as Joan Crawford, Liza Minelli and Senator Edward Kennedy, who brought the case to the United States Congress. This way, she was able to expose a Brazilian dictatorship’s crime abroad, where the censorship imposed on the press by the military did not work, much to the dictatorship’s chagrin. (Insituto Zuzu Angel, n.d.).

In 1972, the stylist launched the “International Dateline Collection IV—The Helpless Angel” (“O Anjo Desamparado”) in New York. In this collection she used many plaid pattern fabrics along with embroidery of angels and other designs which Zuzu named

"political fashion". The Brazilian press, continued to describe this embroidery as simply details of children's story books, even though the stylist made it clear it wasn't. At the same time, this work was helping other mothers in the same situation she was by financially supporting protest campaigns, which were paid with the revenues of her fashion work (Silva, 2006).

Zuzu knew that she was taking a huge risk and had already expressed her fears to those who were close to her, for example leaving the composer Chico Buarque de Hollanda a message stating: "If I appear dead by accident or other means, it will have been the work of murderers of my beloved son." Nearly twenty-five years later, in 1998, the Comissão de Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos (Commission of Political Deaths and Disappearances), in judging case 237/96, and based on the testimony of lawyer Marcos Pires—who stated that he saw a car passing Zuzu's vehicle on the left, throwing her off the road—acknowledged that the military regime was responsible for the murder of Zuzu Angel. The tunnel was renamed after her.

The US government, according to US embassy documents that were divulged by WikiLeaks, demonstrated concern with Zuzu's death and its repercussion, not ruling out the possibility of crime (although reporting it was not evident). In 2012, former DOPS' (*Departamento de Operações de Informações*, a Brazilian intelligence and repression agency during the regime) chief of police, Cláudio Guerra, wrote in his book *Memórias de Uma Guerra Suja* ("Memories of a Dirty War") that Colonel Freddie Perdigão was the organizer of the ambush that killed her.

As thoughtfully summarized by journalist Júlio Sosa, the regime realized that "The only way to silence a mother in search of a child is by eliminating her" (2018). Up to this

day, her daughters Hildergard and Ana Cristina Angel, are still trying to find Stuart's remains to fulfill their mother's wish and be able to bury their brother (Carvalho, 2014). Hildergard became a journalist and is very vocal about the legacy of Zuzu Angel, now available on an official web site with an archive of her letters and “political fashion” collections.

2.2 DOROTHY STANG:

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God". According to the executor, those were Dorothy Stang's last words, before being shot six times on a road in the middle of the Amazon.

The missionary Dorothy Stang was born May 7th, 1931 in Dayton, Ohio and sent to work in Brazil in 1966, a country she adopted as her own, naturalizing as Brazilian a few years later. She sought to protect farmworkers from criminal gangs working for the “fazendeiros” (ranchers, landowner) who were after their lots. Stang is frequently pictured wearing a T-shirt with the words “*A Morte da floresta é o fim da nossa vida*”, Portuguese for "The Death of the Forest is the End of Our Lives".

“Irmã Dorothy”, as she was known in the community, was murdered at the age of 73 in Anapu, on February 12th, 2005. For at least four years, Stang denounced threats she received from ranchers and loggers, but received no state protection.

Sister Dorothy was part of the National Coordination of the Pastoral Land Commission and the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) and well known in the region, providing support to small agroextractivist producers for over 3 decades. At the time of her death, Stang was fighting for the implementation of the “Hope Sustainable

Development Project” (Projeto de Desenvolvimento Sustentável Esperança) for extractive communities in the region. However, the area was also claimed by prominent loggers and ranchers. According to the Civil Police investigation, the two men who ordered her assassination, Vitalmiro Bastos de Moura and Regivaldo Pereira Galvão paid around USD 15,000 (50.000 reais) for Dorothy's death.

According to the Sisters of Notre Dame of Damour (n.d.), “hired killings of human rights advocates, environmentalists, and farmers account for one-third of the deaths in the region each year”. The purpose of these designed homicides is to eradicate opposition to the clear-cutting and burning of the rainforest so that soy plantations can be expanded, trees can be logged, and cattle can graze. The organization adds that “Another goal of the killings is to eliminate those who empower and educate the peasants; and finally the killings are meant to intimidate the farmers and keep them ensnared in an endless cycle of debt, akin to slavery. Sister Dorothy became a prime target” (ibid.).

Fourteen years after the crime, real justice is still in process. After successive trials and the controversial cancellation of the verdict that sentenced Moura to 30 years in prison, both he and Galvão remained free until March 2019, when Galvão was arrested. This case is not an exception but unfortunately the rule, and a faithful portrayal of the violence and impunity that afflict rural communities throughout Brazil and especially the Amazon (Greenpeace, 2015).

Stang was called by many a “martyr of the Amazon”, being compared to activist Chico Mendes, who was also killed (in the late '80s) in similar circumstances. Her biographer, Roseanne Murphy (2014), emphasized how much energy Stang put into developing Base Communities to teach the farmers, also encouraging them to build schools for their children

and organizing themselves in unions. She was a strong believer in the power of education and agitation, one of the reasons she was accused of being “communist” by the ranchers during her first decades in Brazil. Stang refused to flee, even when realizing that the authorities would not do enough to ensure her safety. Even though frustrated with the system, she chose to stay and fight for what she believed (ibid.).

Dorothy was leaving home early for a community meeting—where she was supposed to talk about environmental rights—and was followed by two men. When asked by one of the perpetrators if she had a gun, she showed her bible and said that it “is the only weapon I need”. She read to them before being shot six times. In a grim coincidence, Sister Dorothy was killed in a community named *Esperança*, which means “Hope” in Portuguese. Her legacy and her fight go on.

2.3 PATRÍCIA ACIOLI

Patrícia Lourival Acioli was a Brazilian judge renowned for her work against organized crime in the Rio de Janeiro State, best known for convicting members of militia gangs and corrupt police officers. Acioli joined the judiciary in 1992 in the Legal Service and became a judge in 1999. According to police sources, from 2001 to 2011 the judge was responsible for the arrest of about 60 police officers linked to militias and extermination groups (Lauriano, 2011) and was considered “hardline” for not bending to the system’s vices and internal or external pressures.

On the night of August 11, 2011, Patrícia returned by car from the São Gonçalo court, where she worked, to her home in the neighborhood of Piratininga, in the city of Niterói. Upon arriving at her residence, she was ambushed by two men and shot 21 times. The

murder reverberated throughout Brazil and abroad. The former president of Brazilian Federal Supreme Court, Cezar Peluso, described the act as “an attack on the Brazilian government and democracy” and ordered an investigation by the Federal Police. Former Rio de Janeiro governor Sérgio Cabral Filho promised a rigorous investigation of the case.

Judge Patrícia Acioli was on a list of twelve people “scheduled to die”, according to investigators. This list was found with Wanderson da Silva Tavares, the head of a militia in São Gonçalo, arrested a few months before Acioli’s assassination. According to the investigations carried out by Deputy Felipe Ettore and Commissioner José Carlos Guimarães of the Homicide Division of the State of Rio de Janeiro, the murder of Patrícia was committed by military police officers angry with her work regarding a group of agents who worked in the city of São Gonçalo, practicing homicide and extortion. In April 2014, all eleven police officers tried in the case were convicted by the Justice (Marinatto, 2014; G1, 2014).

Patricia had three children. Her eldest son, Mike Chagas, gave an interview in 2017 to a local newspaper and revealed that he and his siblings still “live in a state of alertness”. They use armored cars, which the state had not provided their mother, and avoid going out at night. "We felt very neglected," said Chagas, who, with the trauma, began to fear both common criminals and police officers. "if we hear noise of fireworks, we think it is gunshots. We live on probation" (Estadão, 2017).

In order to honor the memory of Judge Patrícia Acioli and to continue the magistrate's fight for human dignity, the Association of Magistrates of the State of Rio de Janeiro (“Associação dos Magistrados do Estado do Rio de Janeiro”) created the Patrícia Acioli Humans Rights Award, contemplating four categories—magistrate, journalist, humanistic

activism and academic research (AMAERJ, n.d.). In 2014, a forum in the city where Acioli worked was named after her. During the opening ceremony, her family's lawyer, Técio Lins e Silva said: "The Forum has a content of freedom, of defense of justice that transcends the tributes that normally give names to the forums. Patrícia was an extremely independent and strong woman, executed the in most coward and unacceptable way. The TJ [court of justice] today makes justice [...] and voices to Brazil that the crime against Patrícia is unacceptable" (PJERJ, 2014).

2.4 MARIELLE FRANCO

Marielle Francisco da Silva, known as Marielle Franco, was born in July 27th, 1979 and raised in a favela (Maré) in Rio de Janeiro. Franco started working when she was 11 years old and gave birth to her only daughter, Luyara, when she was 19. With no support from the child's father, she raised her child by herself while working and pursuing a degree in Social Sciences, having earned a scholarship from Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, a prestigious university in Brazil. She went on to receive a master's degree in public administration from the Universidade Federal Fluminense, writing her master's thesis on the law enforcement program to retake control of the city's favelas from gangs (entitled "UPP: The Reduction of the Favela to Three Letters").

Her political career started in 2007, as a consultant for state representative Marcelo Freixo; she also worked on the state legislature's Committee for the Defense of Human Rights and Citizenship (Gouveia, 2016) where she continued to witness the mourning of families who lost their children to the violence in favelas. As the Agência de Notícias da Favela ("Favela's News Agency") introduced her in a 2016 interview, "The only

representative of the favelas elected to Rio’s Legislative after more than 15 years of militancy, Marielle Franco now makes the leap to be the voice of women, young blacks and families from favelas in the City Council”. She was also representation for LGBT+ communities—Marielle and her long-time partner Mônica were supposed to get married in November 2018.

She was elected in her first political campaign, in October 2016, as Rio de Janeiro’s fifth-most voted councilwoman, with over 46 thousand votes. In the Chamber, Marielle was part of the group of four members of a commission created in February to monitor the work of federal intervention in public security in the state. As councilwoman she also presided over the Commission for the Defense of Women. On that subject, she presented a project for the creation of the “Dossiê da Mulher Carioca” (Women's Dossier from Rio), to lead the city of Rio de Janeiro into compiling data on gender violence (G1, 2018). She also worked as a pro-choice advocate, besides promoting the expansion of the “Casas de Parto” centers (birthing centers), places intended for natural, humanized births—Brazil suffers from a chronic epidemic of cesarean births and obstetric violence. She was a champion of this cause, defending women’s autonomy over their own bodies in one of their greater moments of vulnerability (ibid.).

Marielle’s intense political career and prodigious civil militance was cowardly silenced in March 2018, when the councilwoman was ambushed and fatally shot by two men inside her car. She had just left a meeting, “Roda de Conversa Jovens Negras Movendo as Estruturas” (Discussion Circle of Black Women Moving the Structure, in an approximate translation). As the official online website dedicated to Marielle Franco describes:

In our last meeting with Marielle we had with dozens of powerful black women, who move the structures of the racist and sexist society we live in. It was a heck of a farewell—a long talk about black women's ancestry and participation in politics and life.

Franco's driver, Anderson Gomes, was also killed and her personal advisor was wounded but survived. Marielle's death was followed by an enormous outpouring of emotion and activity inside and outside of Brazil. Women's movements protested in the main Brazilian cities, launching the motto "Marielle Presente" ("Marielle is present" or "Marielle still", depending on the interpretation) that quickly went viral—the hashtag #Mariellepresente had over 4.8 million publications in the first 24 hours following her murder. Thousands took to the streets in coordinated protests across Brazil, and both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch condemned her death. As stated by The Guardian journalist and Franco's friend Glenn Greenwald: "Her relentless and brave activism against the most lawless police battalions, her opposition to military intervention, and, most threateningly of all, her growing power as a black, gay woman from the favela seeking not to join Brazil's power structure, but to subvert it".

2.5 ANALYZING THE CASE STUDIES:

"Dói saber que somos assassinadas quando chegamos lá"—Gabriele Roza

("It hurts to know that we are murdered when we get there")

It is possible to trace some patterns from the four cases here presented. First, one must take into consideration the advances and contextual changes that Brazil has faced from the 1970s to the current day. The military regime was finally defeated in 1989, and though the transition to democracy was not smooth nor definitive—especially since the 2016 impeachment—Brazil has moved to a democratic presidential regime and its institutions and legal system are more solid and present than 40 years ago. However, gender-based violence rates are still alarming. According to a G1 (2018) research, the number of femicides are still increasing at 6.5% (comparing the last two years). For Samira Bueno and Juliana Martins, from the *Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública* (Brazilian Forum of Public Security), "A woman is murdered every two hours in Brazil, a rate of 4.3 deaths for each group of 100,000 women. If we consider the last report of the World Health Organization, Brazil would occupy the 7th position among the most for a total of 83 countries" (G1, 2018).

Regarding the cases of Zuzu, Dorothy, Patricia and Marielle one might observe that political gender-based violence in Brazil presents some constants. Firstly, the role of the state—if not directly responsible for what happened (such as in Zuzu's case, as recognized in 1998) the institutions were negligent. Patricia Acioli had reported dozens of death threats during an interval of two years, and yet the Brazilian *Tribunal de Justiça* (Court of Law) declared that she didn't need 24/7 protection. The judge also didn't have access to armored cars that could have been decisive for her life. Sister Dorothy had also filed many complaints with the police and was frustrated by the lack of response.

The modus operandi of these crimes is similar in 3 out of 4 cases—the perpetrators waited for the victims be on their cars and chased or followed them, shooting the vehicles

without any risk of reaction. Sister Dorothy's assassination is an exception but an even more cowardly case, since the only "weapon" at her disposal at the time was her bible.

It is possible to conclude that despite different contexts and geographical spaces—either in the middle of the Amazon or in a big city—being a political active and socially engaged woman in Brazil is a risky decision. As Marielle Franco said in an interview one month before her death, "Who watches the watchers?" The lack of a free and safe space for female political and social leadership is outrageous and disgraceful for the leading country of Latin America. However, as Senator Grazziotin declares—"it's bad for women but much worse for democracy"

Finally, it is also possible to realize how slow and or ineffective the system was in providing justice in these cases. Zuzu's case was only acknowledged as homicide 22 years after the crime. Dorothy's killers remain free 13 years after her murder. An exception is the case of Patricia Acioli, though some attribute the arresting of all defendants to her active role in the juridical system and internal pressures of colleagues and friends more than the natural course of the process.

CHAPTER 3: GLOBAL AND LOCAL RESPONSES

This chapter's objective is to analyze how each one of the depicted case studies was met by national and international organs of human rights advocacy, by non-governmental organizations and civil society overall. Similarly, it aims to more fully contextualize each case and what was happening in terms of politics and social structure at the time. It is important to stress that responses don't necessarily mean solutions: we are talking here about how the crimes were perceived, how different actors expressed themselves about the killings and the reasons behind them.

When talking about responses, we include accountability, international condemnation, and media coverage, either written as editorials or as opinion pieces (or guest columns, as denominated by some news vehicles). Media coverage includes regional and national newspapers, television and online resources, as well as international vehicles. Since it is virtually impossible to compile all news written in response to each case study (for different reasons: for the first case-study, that took place during the military regime, the coverage was very limited; the last one, in contrast, is still in development and the quantity of social media and mainstream media coverage makes simply impossible to address of all them), we focused on prominent media sources and those with a clear differentiation—such as human rights websites or feminist news sites, like *Geledés* itself.

Protests and demonstrations are also included as forms of response, either from a more political or more artistic perspective. Carnival—as briefly mentioned in chapter 1—is also included here. The 2019 Brazilian Carnival was the most political one in decades, displaying a strong opposition to the new government and some of its ideologies—such as

homophobia, sexism and racism. By addressing the topic of *machismo* and resistance through parody and symbols of ridicule, gender issues and political questions were brought to the streets and the *sambódramos*. Marielle Franco was honored by two samba schools and dozens of *blocos de rua* (street groups of revelers), which will be further discussed towards the end of this chapter. The backlash from Bolsonaro supporters and the president himself were also blatant. This drastic politization of a national festival—that is typically associated with recreation and tourism—reinforces that political responses happen in a multitude of shapes and actors.

Civil society responses also include the use of boycotts, open letters, motions of repudiation (also known as rejection motions), petitions, etc. More recently, some of these forms of protests happen in the online sphere, specially through the social media. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are the platforms most often used to address political subjects, and even though their fluidity and instantaneous nature complicates their tracking, the use of hashtags give us a more quantitative way of following up on public reaction. It is possible to identify who, where and how many people are talking about a specific case or reacting to a new law, etc. This way, using the convenience of their electronic devices, anyone can give their response to a political or social event. Obviously that can also result in collateral effects such as fake news, trolls, cyber-bullying and others, since the social media makes it possible for users to hide their identity or use somebody else's. Following the time-line presented in chapter 2, we start with the context of the 1960s military regime and our first case study's response.

3.1 MILITARY REGIME: THE YEARS OF LEAD X HUMAN RIGHTS RESPONSE:

The Military Dictatorship in Brazil was an authoritarian regime that began with a military coup on March 31, 1964, resulting in the deposition of President João Goulart. However, even the context and motives that led to the coup are complicated: Goulart consolidated his public career as Minister of Labor in 1953 where his most famous decision was to raise the minimum wage by 100%. The minimum wage was extremely outdated at the time, and the high inflation rates made almost impossible for a worker survive only with it. Even so, conservative sectors strongly criticized this measure and associated Vargas (then president) and João Goulart with communism, increasing the pressure for the president's resignation. When Vargas committed suicide in 1954, Goulart became his political heir, being later elected as vice-president to Jânio Quadros in 1961 and then acting president a few months later, when Quadros stepped aside, declaring political persecution (Neves Delgado, 2010).

Goulart, however, was on a diplomatic mission in China at the time of Quadros's resignation, and the government was in the hands of three military ministers until his return—the military intended to avoid João Goulart's inauguration by pressing Congress to approve the vice president's impeachment. The fact that Goulart was visiting communist China was also used to prevent him taking office, and he only manage to become president by accepting a constitutional amendment that established parliamentarism in Brazil, reducing his powers. Even so, his government was extremely troubled and marked by coup attempts and blatant right-wing distrust. When in 1964, a plebiscite ended parliamentarism and gave back Goulart's full powers, he announced an agenda of land expropriation, nationalization of oil refineries and an electoral reform guaranteeing the vote for illiterates that—as one might imagine—shocked the right wing to its core. Dealing with inflation of over 70% and pressure

for a new constitution, the circumstances were perfect for a military coup in 1964 (Neves Delgado, 2009).

In the international climate of the Cold War, foreign intervention also played a role in the coup d'état. There was US support, through funding from the CIA and in what is known as “Brother Sam Operation”—ambassador Lincoln Gordon and military attaché Vernon Walters had decided to provide logistical support to military coup agents, should they face long resistance from forces loyal to the president (CPDOC, n.d.). It was not necessary: Goulart sought asylum in Uruguay and on April 9, Institutional Act No. 1 was decreed, empowering the Congress to elect the new president. US President Lyndon Johnson was recorded affirming how happy he was about the news from Brazil and that “I hope they give us some credit, instead of hell” (Green, 2003).

The newly-installed president was General Humberto de Alencar Castelo Branco, previous chief of the army. After the 1964 coup, the political model aimed at strengthening executive power. Seventeen institutional acts and about a thousand exceptional laws were imposed on Brazilian society (Bezerra, 2019). Bipartisanship was imposed, dissolving all previous political parties: now there was only the National Renewal Alliance (Arena), which supported the government, and the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB), an opposition party surrounded by strict limits. Institutional acts were promulgated during the governments of generals Castelo Branco (1964-1967) and Artur da Costa e Silva (1967-1969), that marked the beginning of the “years of lead”.

In reality, the government imposed a permanent state of exception, ending the democratic institutions of the country. In 1968, Costa e Silva sanctioned AI-5 (institutional act number 5), annulling the constitution: the suspension of political rights, now

decentralized, could be enacted with extreme speed and no bureaucracy; the defendant's right of defense was eliminated; suspects could be arrested immediately, without the a court order; ordinary citizens' political rights were canceled and individual rights were eliminated by the institution of the crime of disobedience (Governo do Brasil, 1964).

Human rights violations that started along with the dictatorship, became much more frequent and blatant with the AI-5 sanction. Torture, disappearance, deaths were part of daily life. 1968 is known as "the year that has not ended", marked in world history and in Brazil as a time of great challenge to politics and customs: the student movement strongly protested traditionalism and the regime. This movement in Brazil was associated with a more organized resistance against the regime, especially among university students. On the other hand, the military "hard line" promoted more sophisticated instruments of torture and planned stricter actions against the opposition (CPDOC, s/n). Also during 1968, the Catholic Church began to take more expressive action in defense of human rights, and political leaders who had been deposed continued to associate among themselves, aspiring to return to national politics and to fight against the dictatorship.

Torture was used not only against people involved in the resistance against the dictatorship, but also against people without any connection, as happened with thousands of indigenous people and even with infants: Carlos Alexandre Azevedo at 1 year and 8 months was victim of torture by agents of the dictatorship. According to the Human Rights Watch, 20 thousand people were tortured by the regime between 1964 and 1985. At least 434 people were killed or remain missing, according to official figures (Jansen, 2019)—that we know of. Indicative of this lack of certainty, in 1990 over one thousand bags of human remains were

recovered from a clandestine grave (GOV.BR, n.d.), by accident. As written by historians Lilia Schwarcz and Heloísa Starling:

In Brazil, the practice of political torture was not the result of the incidental actions of unbalanced personalities ... It was a killing machine designed to obey a logic of combat: to destroy the enemy before it acquired ability to fight (2015: 457)

During the 1970s and early 1980s, the United States' Operation Condor enabled a regional network of repression and torture, killing at least 42 thousand people across Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay (Norton, 2015). The operation—also known as *Carcará* in Brazil—was born in 1975, when intelligence chiefs from the Latin American dictatorships decided to collaborate in order to destroy left-wing activities. “Operation Condor was the consequent campaign of systematic repression and assassination of left-wing dissidents, organizers, and intellectuals, carried out by US-backed right-wing dictatorial Latin American governments”, as summarized by writer Ben Norton (2015).

Throughout 21 years of military dictatorship, different forms of resistance were organized in Brazilian society. First, it is important to mention the role of popular demonstrations that took place between 1964 and 1968. Rio de Janeiro, for example, was the scene of gigantic demonstrations that suffered severe repression from the dictatorship, but MPB Festivals (Brazilian Popular Music) provided an outlet, hiding resistance messages in lyrics that frequently used puns to escape the censure while also sending a message. Chico Buarque de Holanda, Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso and Geraldo Vandré were prominent

names of this movement and, by the end of the 1960s, all these four artists were forced to exile.

There were also demonstrations of resistance in the political milieu—in the early years of the dictatorship there was *Frente Ampla* a political movement created by Carlos Lacerda. A conservative politician who supported the coup in the beginning, Lacerda ceased his support when the 1965 presidential elections were canceled. He was arrested in 1968 and died a few years later, coincidentally (or not) during the same period when the other two leaders of *Frente Ampla* passed away.

Finally, with the hardening of the regime, a new form of resistance to the dictatorship emerged in Brazil: *Resistência Armada*, the armed resistance. The group that launched the armed resistance was composed mostly of middle-class members and students who did not agree with the regime's authoritarianism and saw no solution—since the regime did not allow them to criticize it in a peaceful form—other than resistance. The armed resistance carried out a series of actions, such as bomb attacks, one of them against the American embassy in 1968. There were also assaults and abductions as forms of struggle against the dictatorship.

Among the prominent names of the armed resistance are Carlos Marighella and Carlos Lamarca. Former President Dilma Rousseff was also part of the movement, organizing the Vanguarda Popular Revolucionária Palmares. Even though Dilma affirmed that she never effectively used guns, she was arrested and tortured in 1970 (*Memórias da Ditadura*, n.d.). The repression of the dictatorship against these groups in the early 1970s, however, made the armed resistance virtually disappear from the country (Schwarcz and Starling, 2015).

In terms of international response, the United States' foreign policy initiatives regarding Latin America started changing in the 1970s, pressed by nongovernmental activists. With the Carter (1977-1981) administration, more scholars started writing about Human Rights and against torture in Brazil, led by Brady Tyson, Ralph Della Cava, Jovelino Ramos and Thomas Quigley. In Congress, Senator Frank Church (D-Idaho, 1943–1946) admitted that even though he didn't believe that there were direct links between the US and "repressive activities of the Brazilian government", the "too close" existence of advisers "present on the scene means that the United States has to pay the political price of identification with a repressive government." (Welles, 1971)

Following that, the resistance in Brazil and the exiled Brazilian intellectuals started to insert Human Rights in Latin America into political debates around the US and West European countries. The creation of NACLA (North American Congress on Latin America) in 1966 started to gather left-wing Catholics, Peace Corps volunteers, grad students, and young professors against the regimes in Latin America (Green, 2003). Later, thanks to Christian newspapers such as *Christianity and Crisis*, *The Christian Century*, and *Christianity Today*, the repressive reputation of the military regime started to appear in mainstream publications such as *Time*, *Newsweek* and *The Nation* (ibid.). This slowly built a solidarity network in the US, frequently associated with the anti-war movement.

In 1971, military president Emílio Garrastazu Médici (1969-1974) had his official visit to Washington cut down from five days to two, partly because of the Committee Against Repression in Brazil's demonstration in front of the White House—their first campaign. The *Washington Post* observed that the idea of Médici addressing the US Congress was likely dropped "to avoid the possibility of a hostile demonstration" (Green, 2003) confirmed by the

6th edition of “Brazilian Information Bulletin”, a bulletin published by the “American Friends of Brazil” in UC, Berkeley.

3.2 THE RESPONSE TO THE ZUZU ANGEL CASE

*“Quem é essa mulher
Que canta sempre o mesmo arranjo
Só queria agasalhar meu anjo
E deixar seu corpo descansar”
- Chico Buarque, “Angélica”*

“Who is this woman / Who sings the same arrangement / Who just wanted to wrap my boy / And let his body rest” are verses of the song “Angélica” written and performed by singer Chico Buarque, one of the main names of cultural resistance against the military regime. Buarque, one of the last people to see Zuzu Angel before the “accident” that cost her life, dedicated the 1981 song to his good friend. On his official website, the artist talks about Angel and her struggle and death:

“She was a woman who for years after her son's death did nothing but dedicate herself to denouncing her son's murderers, claiming the right to know where his body was. She was going from door to door. The morning of the accident, she visited me and left t-shirts she made, engraved with those little angels that were her trademark, for my three daughters. That touched me forever” (Chicobuarque.com).

Buarque also mentions how Angel’s death followed shortly after her managing to evade Henry Kissinger’s security blockade and giving him a folder with copies of all the

documents she had about the dictatorship and its human rights violations. In October 1975, Angel discussed her son's case with the Amnesty International in London; however, they asked her for more documentation to proceed (Green, 2010).

There was not a large response to Zuzu's death as far as it was possible to verify. As mentioned previously, her passing was reported as an accident until decades later even though her daughters and friends never bought the military version. This lack of immediate response, however, says much by itself. Angel was murdered in the apex of the *Lead Years* in Brazil. The absolute fear of communism in a Cold War context—since the beginning of João Goulart's presidency—led any progressive politics and/or forms of expression to be dismissed as communist, insubordinate, and a danger to be silenced, with and by the state's "legitimacy". Zuzu was directly, actively killed by the Brazilian government, as thousands of other women and men during the 21 years of military regime. However, this is not the only form of administration guilty of killing politically active women, as this thesis aims to prove.

Zuzu's memory is honored today by a few public initiatives, such as naming the tunnel where she died in her honor and creating in 1997 a Women's Center after her memory, the *Centro Especial de Orientação à Mulher—Zuzu Angel* ("Special Women's Orientation Center Zuzu Angel") in São Gonçalo, in Rio de Janeiro. In 2006, the movie *Zuzu Angel*, starring actors Patrícia Pillar and Daniel de Oliveira was released, watched by over 700,000 people in theaters. It was produced with public money through the *Rouanet Law*⁶, a law whose role is providing monetary funds for use in art and culture, including the production of movies. It is intended to encourage cultural investments and its major highlight is a tax incentive policy that enables companies and citizens to deduct a portion of income

⁶ The Rouanet Law was described by new President Bolsonaro as a "disgrace" and drastically reduced its contribution limit from 60 to 1 million *reais*. He declared that socialism was promoted by the law. (Exame, 2019a)

tax (Ministério da Cultura, n.d.). And in an irony of history, the law that funded the movie about Zuzu Angel is now in danger, because it is considered by the new government ‘as a tool to spread communism’.

3.3 VIOLENCE AGAINST ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM IN BRAZIL

The Amazon represents half of the remaining rainforests in the world (WWF, n.d.) and 60% of it is contained in Brazilian territory. Spread across all seven states of the North region and two others (Mato Grosso and Maranhão), the *Amazônia Legal* is over five million km², representing 59% of the nation’s land but only slightly more than 12% of its total population. Despite being the least populated area of Brazil, three of the Amazon states are among the top six most violent in the country and while the most worrisome case in 2018 was Roraima—sharing borders with Venezuela, the humanitarian crisis has led to political instability in the region, which adds to rebellions in the penitentiary system promoted by the factional dispute—the state of Acre follows closely, ranking fourth place in national homicide rates (USP, 2018). Acre was also the site of an event with great international repercussions, the killing of environmental activist Chico Mendes by local farmers in retaliation for the extractive reserve he founded. The leader’s death—he was nicknamed ‘the hero of the forest’—illuminated a problem that goes back a long way: the murder of environmental activists in the Amazon region and the boundless impunity that follows these crimes.

The small town of Xapuri, nearly on the border with Bolivia, became the object of international attention in 1988 with the murder of Francisco Alves Mendes Filho, known as

Chico Mendes. The *seringueiro*—the Brazilian term for “rubber tapper”—became a political figure by organizing a union deep in the world’s biggest forest. Back then, Acre had been a national state for less than three decades, completely off the national political map, but Mendes gained many allies from different groups—from fellow tappers to international conservationists—and he was honored by the UN in 1987 (Memória Globo, 1988). He visited the USA numerous times to press international development banks and politicians to halt loans for road-building projects in the Amazon until these plans incorporated the goals of the forest people. His purpose was to sustain communities of rubber tappers and indigenous peoples who actually *knew how* to live in the forest without destroying it (Hill, 2013.).

Illegal deforestation and mining were the main reason behind the violence back then, but now the motives also include agribusiness—an issue that seems to be increasing along with soy production, replacing natural reserves and indigenous lands (Brazil is currently the world’s biggest soy producer after the US). After almost a decade of decline, deforestation rates have started to rise again, reaching a peak over the period between August 2017 and July 2018, a 13.7 percent jump from the same period last year (Ministério do Meio Ambiente, 2018), in what is called the *cinturão do desmatamento* (“deforestation belt”). This is the result of “watered down forest laws, a powerful agricultural lobby, and the economic downturn, which is driving more people to illegally log timber and clear land for crops”, reports British NGO Global Witness.

According to the organization, Brazil is the most dangerous place in the world to environmentalists: in 2017 alone, 57 activists were killed in the Amazon Region (Fowks, 2018)—that we know of. The Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT) 2018 report reveals that 92% of the lands involved in field conflicts in the country are located in the north, a

confirmation of the invasions that the Amazon region has been suffering. Indigenous communities are also heavily victimized, as exemplified by the slaughter of 22 people of the Gamela tribe in 2017.

Also, as observed by the international organization Amazon Watch, “[the] high-profile murders are just the tip of the iceberg. In the state of Pará alone, 231 people were killed and 809 received death threats between 1996 and 2010”. Pará is known as a “land without law”, where “Violence is the instrument of local capitalism ... They're proud to kill and they're seen by some as local heroes defending their property with their blood. It's insane, but it's what happening there”, says Brazilian political ecologist Felipe Milanez. (Hill, 2013). Besides the numbers, lack of environmental inspection, and restricted government reach, violence is enabled by impunity. “The only [cases] that have a real chance of going to trial are those that get the attention of the national, and especially international, press,” affirms journalist Eliane Brum. “This impunity sends the message that killing is permitted and that it's a way 'to solve' land conflicts or silence people fighting for social justice.” (ibid.). And that links us to a case that took place in Pará and reached strong international response: the murder of sister Dorothy Stang.

3.4 THE RESPONSE TO THE DOROTHY STANG CASE:

A few days ago, on March 16th, the Civil Police Force of Pará publicized the arrest of rancher Reginaldo Pereira Galvão (as known as “Taradão”) in the city of Altamira. He had been sentenced to prison after being convicted of the murder of the American missionary Dorothy Stang, fourteen years ago. Galvão had been in and out of prison for the murder for years; his sentence was reduced in 2017 from 30 to 25 years by the Federal Supreme Court in

Brazil (O Globo, 2019). In an interview with *Global Sisters Report* (2019), Sister Jean Bellini, one of the coordinators of CPT, *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* (Pastoral Land Commission), a body of the Catholic Church that supports landless people, analyzed the recent Supreme Court decision:

"Brazilian society lives in a constant game of antagonistic social forces that press to assert their interests," she declared. "The judiciary, at various levels, bases its decisions on conceptions consistent with its reading of reality and law enforcement. Worth saying, two weights, two measures," she added, meaning that the Brazilian judiciary decides differently depending on who is being sentenced (*Global Sisters Report*, 2019).

Sister Dorothy's death in 2005 was met by national and international indignation, frequently linked with Mendes's death. Stang was working as a missionary in the Brazilian region that historically has had the most dramatic struggles for agrarian reform. Her obituary was written by *The Guardian*, commenting that "her brutal killing shocked Brazil and set off a flurry of belated high-level actions, with ministers flying to her funeral" and that "at a time when America has become a symbol of often ruthless power, Sister Dorothy Stang chose to ally herself with the powerless and pay the price" (*Guardian*, 2005), working for the CPT, the Roman Catholic church's Pastoral Land commission since 1982, moving to a small town on the Trans-Amazon Highway (*ibid.*).

Former President Lula—who was once tried alongside Mendes for union activities—was responsible for setbacks regarding environmental measures in the Amazon area. Under pressure from loggers and their allies, the leftist government restored logging licenses in

2005 that had been suspended in 2004 (*New York Times*, 2005). After Sister Dorothy was killed, nevertheless, the government reversed itself, declared eight million acres to be under protection, and sent in 2,000 federal troops in an effort to restore the rule of law (Hill, 2005).

Sister Dorothy's family wrote an open letter to President Lula advocating for land reform in Brazil, claiming that there were no doubts that the crime was an environmental activism human rights violation and ultimately holding the federal government accountable, while denouncing the corruption in national organs responsible for environmental protection:

Dorothy Stang was a great gift from God to your country. She believed in you, your government, your laws, your people, and the great Amazon Forest. Dorothy devoted 39 years to Brazil's poor, landless, and marginalized. At 73, she still fought for the right of the poor to enter into your great Brazilian economy—only to be ridiculed by lawless loggers, *pistoleiros*, the mayor and radio station in Anapu, local police, your corrupt officials in INCRA and IBAMA, and the consortium of ranchers who many feel paid the *pistoleiros* to murder our sister (O Globo, 2005)

In 2008, Academy Award winner Nigel Nobel produced the documentary “They Killed Sister Dorothy” produced by Just Media and HBO and narrated by American actor Martin Sheen. In 2012, The Embassy of Brazil in Washington, DC was the scene of a march that brought together over 100 people to protest violence in the Brazilian countryside, especially in the Amazon remembering both Chico Mendes and Dorothy Stang. Marguerite Hohm, Dorothy's sister, participated in solidarity with activists who receive death threats in the region (Amazon Watch, 2012).

In 2015 her Californian Alma Mater, Notre Dame de Namur University, honored the “Angel of the Amazon” with a week of special events marking her ongoing legacy of service

in the mission field (*Global Sisters Report*, 2015) in honor of the 10th anniversary of her death. The name “Angel of the Amazon” was given by American composer Evan Mack who wrote and produced an off-Broadway opera about Sister Dorothy. originally produced by Encompass New Opera Theatre and Directed by Nancy Rhodes in May 2011. Described as “a modern tale of strength, devotion and sacrifice... to tell the story of one woman’s fateful journey” (*Angel of The Amazon*, n.d.), Mack said that what struck a chord with him was the fact that Stang met the gunmen who killed her the day before being murdered, fed them, prayed with them, and showed them her work with the peasant farmers of the area (ibid.).

Also in 2015, Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si*, his encyclical letter on the environment, provided an indirect clue that Sister Dorothy might be candidate for sanctification as the patron of the environment, however the last news about this matter are from the same year (Allen, 2015). In his 2013 official visit to Brazil, Pope Francis defended the environment and the Amazon Basin and spoke about environmental activism in two separate occasions during Brazil's World Youth Day festivities. This gave Sister Dorothy’s friends and supporters positive signs to *another* official future homage to her by the Vatican (Abercrombie, 2013): Immediately after her death, Sr. Dorothy was formally recognized by the Vatican as a modern-day martyr. She was also posthumously awarded the United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights in 2008, the year of the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (OHCHR, n.d.).

3.5 THE CONTEXT OF VIOLENCE IN RIO VERSUS HUMAN RIGHTS:

“What could the murder of a judge who fought militias and the killing of a councilwoman who denounced police violence in favelas, both in Rio, have in common? For representatives of entities linked to public security research and human rights advocacy, almost everything.” This analysis by journalist Janaína Garcia (2008), published in one of Brazil’s most famous news websites only a couple of days after Franco’s death summarizes why both women are included in the same subchapter.

Marielle and Patrícia had very different backgrounds. Acioli was born and raised in a middle-class family, spending most of her childhood around the beach neighborhood of Icaraí, a famous wealthy area, center of leisure and tourism in the city of Niterói. In 2014, Icaraí had the best Municipal Human Development Index of the whole state of Rio de Janeiro (Prefeitura de Niterói, n.d.). “Patricia Acioli was part of a generation that [...] entered the professional world when the Constitution of 1988 was being elaborated and promulgated. As legal operator, public defender and later criminal judge, she was daughter of the Constitution”, said PT Senator Lindbergh Farias (2011) following her death. “She benefited from democratic achievements, to which she was always faithful in her institutional practice”.

Marielle Franco lived in the opposite life, born and raised in a *favela*, contributing to her household income since childhood and a single mother as a young woman. Likely, she only had a chance to study later thanks to ProUni (*Programa Universidade para Todos* or “University for All Program”), put in place during Lula’s presidency⁷. In 2000, Franco started to engage with human rights after a friend was fatally shot during a gun exchange between police and traffickers in the Maré favela (Carneiro, 2018).

⁷ ProUni is Federal Government program created to grant integral and partial scholarships in undergrad years and sequential courses of specific training in private higher education institutions. [1] [2] It was instituted by Law No. 11,096 of January 13, 2005.

So, after all, what do Marielle and Patrícia have in common? To begin with, both were women in positions of power and leadership in very masculine environments. The Brazilian judiciary has a female participation rate of barely 37% according to CNJ, the official judiciary organization. According to other sources, however, the percentage is only 33% (G1-DF, 2018). Even though Rio de Janeiro has the most equal gender participation of the country—reaching 48% in 2017 (CNJ, 2017) the courts in general are still mostly male environment. Last year, the unequal composition of speakers at the main legal congress of the country led five female judges from Brasília to request discharge from the Association of Brazilian Magistrates (AMB). The seminar, scheduled to take place in May, had 28 talks—only two were by women. And neither of those two exercised a judiciary function (Marques, 2018).

The legislative world is even more unequal. In 2015, the Inter-Parliamentary Union disclosed a “Women in Parliaments” classification, where Brazil was ranked number 153, almost tying with Myanmar and Botswana (IPU, 2015). In 2018, the World Bank (Ibid) listed Brazil even lower, at the 151th position. The Inter-Parliamentary Union report also showed that the country had the slowest evolution in Latin America when it comes to female legislative participation (2015).

The third branch of the government is even more unequal: In 2018, Brazil is the last on the table in terms of female executive representatives in the American continent and in 161st place among the 186 countries contemplated by this research, elaborated by *Projeto Mulheres Inspiradoras* (“Inspiring Women Project”), cross-tabulating data from the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), the UN and the World Bank. The survey similarly pointed that among all countries ranked only 17 had women as heads of government. This means that, last

year, about 92% of the world's population was ruled by men (Projeto Mulheres Inspiradoras apud El País, 2018).

However, Franco and Acioli have more in common than the gender inequality in their work environment—they were both exposed to corrupt and dangerous sectors of state of law. The two women acted directly against State violence—for example, through Acioli's reports about the 41st BPM (Military Police Battalion) abuses in Acari (a neighborhood in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro), and Franco's reports for the Committee of the City Council of Rio, created to monitor the actions of the troops in federal intervention in the area of state security (Garcia, 2018).

The director of the Human Rights Watch office in Brazil, lawyer Maria Laura Canineu, described Marielle's death as "a disaster for the community that defends human rights because she was a champion of the cause, in the best of its meanings ... Not only for what [she], as a black woman from the favela represented as well as for her actions regarding, defending a public security consistent with international standards" (Garcia, 2018). According to director Canineu, the tragedies that involved the judge and the councilwoman intersected not only in their militancy against violence, but because of the sectors of the democratic State of law that they represented (ibid.). Adding to this statement, it is safe to say that they are also linked by how the state of law failed both, through negligence and impunity.

Human Rights Watch also stated that the ambience of impunity is what motivates this kind of brutality (2019), pointing out that in the state of Rio de Janeiro, prosecutors filed charges in only 12 percent of homicide cases in 2015 (ibid.). The problem is not limited to Rio. In 2012, the National Council of the Public Prosecutor's Office identified very low rates

of homicide clearance across the country. Among the 43,123 investigations monitored (completed between March 2010 and April 2012), 78% were closed due to the impossibility of convicting the perpetrators, mainly due to the long time elapsed between the crime and the work of reviewing the investigation (Instituto Sou da Paz, 2017).

Even though the two crimes were partially solved—six military police officers were convicted and jailed for the murder of the judge; Marielle’s case is still in process, as will be discussed in the following sub-chapter—they are still two examples of the many cases involving two forces in the Rio *favelas*: the *traficantes*, divided in *facções* (organized crime groups) and the *milícias*. The *Milícias*, militias or paramilitary groups, are in fact gangs linked to current and former law enforcement agents, prison guards and firefighters. When militias began appearing in west Rio neighborhoods around in the late 1990s, many residents initially welcomed them, as “community self-defence” groups who promised to cut crime and drug dealing (Phillips, 2018). However, they soon started extorting “security taxes” (*taxas*) from businesses, taking control of cooking gas sales, regulating transport routes, and administering pirate cable TV and internet services in the communities—but most of all, the *milicianos* are also involved in drug trafficking (Franco, 2019).

This chaos and violence are classified by sociologist Michel Misse (2017) as a “Social Accumulation of Violence”: the historical and social process that led Rio to the complex social situation that can be seen nowadays. Even though it is built mostly by three actors (police, militias, and drug networks) it encompasses the whole society, government, media and public actors. It is a powder keg made combining two elements: an extremely organized crime, that often has better resources and weaponing than the state; and also police

officers who are usually poorly paid and trained, while in constant danger. To add to the mix::

the police officers take upon themselves the state monopoly of violence, even if in an illegitimate and illegal manner. It is widely recognized that the fear, but also the disdain, for the police in Brazil is stronger than the respect for the institution and indicates a deep historic separation between state and society (Misse, 2015).

This is only part of the complex context of 21st century Rio de Janeiro, where Marielle's and Patricia's stories took place. After years in the shadows since the death of Acioli, Brazil's militias and drug wars came back to the spotlight after the assassination Franco last year.

3.6 THE RESPONSE TO THE ACIOLI AND FRANCO CASES:

Renowned conservative magazine *Veja* published an article, only days after Acioli's murder, claiming that she signed her own death sentence by placing herself and the magistracy in the path of a gang of bad cops who until then had acted at will. The translation sounds accusatory, but the original article intended to disclose a pattern of violence against those who get in the way of the militias. Hours before being attacked, Acioli ordered the imprisonment of three members of the group (*Veja*, 2011), the last straw to Colonel Claudio Luiz Silva de Oliveira, commander of the 7BPM Reserved Service, and his gang—the judge, by then, was convinced that the commander was aware of the crimes, and, even if he had not

ordered them, he at least covered up the executions. In the Forum of São Gonçalo, she began to say that, after being able to arrest Bezerra, she would also arrest Colonel Claudio (ibid.).

The legal response to her death was fast for Brazilian standards: 30 days after the crime, the Justice ordered the jailing of three military police officers linked to her death. Colonel Claudio was condemned in 2013 to 36 years in prison, for ordering the crime. Immediately after the crime, the judge's killing prompted Brazil's Supreme Court to demand a swift investigation by federal police (*The Telegraph*, 2018) by president of the Supreme Court Cezar Peluso—the request was deferred and ultimately rejected by *Secretaria de Segurança do Rio* (Security Secretariat). “Cowardly crimes against magistrates are an attack on the independence of the judiciary, the state and Brazilian democracy”, declared Peluso, adding that the preservation of the rule of law demanded a rapid investigation of the facts and a rigorous punishment (ibid.). Not all public representatives agreed with Peluso: in August of 2011, State Deputy Flávio Bolsonaro—and Bolsonaro's son—tweeted: “God rest her soul, but the absurd and gratuitous way she humiliated cops in the sessions contributed to many enemies” (@FlavioBolsonaro. August 12, 2011, 4:39am).

Acting Public Security minister, Raul Jungmann announced in June 2018 that Franco's case required more patience, but he was sure of the operation's success, highlighting that the case was investigated by the same team that dealt with Acioli's case. He declared that other public departments were cooperating with the case—such as the Federal Police and other intelligence organs (which did not happen in the Acioli case)—since arresting the killer was important but identifying who ordered it in the first place was even more so. Jungmann also mentioned the international repercussion of the case and the complex implications of the case (G1 Rio, 2018b).

In August 2018, director of Homicide Division affirmed that comparing Marielle's and Patrícia's cases was unfair: "investigating homicides is not a cake recipe", affirmed him when questioned in last August about the lack of responses: "In terms of investigation ... since the beginning the judge case had already an evident line of in examination, which means it was less complex to investigate in opposition to Marielle's case (ISTOE, 2018).

In terms of media coverage, Patricia Acioli's murder was covered nationally and had a couple of highlights internationally, in the pages of the *Telegraph* (2011) and *Le Monde* (2011). The first mentioned how the judge's family said she had received several death threats, but no police escort. The latter reinforced the same story, adding that the judge's list of convictions on the 4th court of Sao Gonçalo included militiamen and mafia members involved with illegal transport and altered fuels. In 2018, a couple of days after Marielle Franco's death, newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* published a piece mourning how little Acioli's death had changed security in Rio de Janeiro: "The case has had great repercussion in the media, as now with councilor Marielle Franco... but little in Rio has changed. Two examples, less than a year later [after Patricia's death], occurred in October 2012, including the death of retired judge Gilberto Fernandes, 78, the first black man to be a judge at the Rio Court of Justice, in Niterói" (Folha de São Paulo, 2018).

Marielle's death, in the other hand, was extensively covered by both national and international traditional news websites and social media. Some of the publications that carried the story just in the first days following the crime were: *TIME*, *The Guardian*, *BBC*, *The Washington Post*, *Al Jazeera*, *The Irish Times*, *Deutsche Welle*, *Global Voices*, *Le Monde*, *L'Express*, *Le Figaro*, *Corriere della Sera* and *La Repubblica*. In the regional scope,

Chilean *La Tercera*, Argentine *El Clarín*, Uruguay's *El Observador*, Colombian *El Espectador* and *El Heraldo* and many others disclosed the news.

Global Voices — “an international and multilingual community of bloggers, journalists, translators, academics, and human rights activists”— fixated on the Facebook posts that denigrated Marielle’s image following her death. In a legal response, Judge Jorge Jansen Counago Novelle accepted the complaint made by Franco’s widow and ordered Facebook to delete these images within 24 hours:

“It is ordered that the site remove all publications, posts and videos of all the links pointed out in the Initial Petition and attached documents, with the Defendant having availability of resources, filters and representatives, excluding the publicity of any other data which offend the intimacy, honor and image of the eminent Councilwoman MARIELLE FRANCO, barbarously murdered, including photographs related to criminal publications or injurious to her memory” (Process: 0070926-71.2018.8.19.0001, translation by the author)

In the meantime, legal group *ESJA Advogadas* (female lawyers, in Portuguese) worked in parallel to investigate and trace slanderous posts against Marielle on social networks. They declared, back in March 2018, that anyone who shared WhatsApp audios or social media posts with defamation against the sociologist would be duly prosecuted (Fórum, 2018). It was also possible to send denounces directly to Marielle Franco’s online portal, where her team was also listing the calumnies and directing them to lawyers.

But the responses to Marielle’s death were not restricted to media coverage or legal processes. Cultural, artistic and symbolic protests took place around Brazil following her death and are still happening one year later—created by people from opposite métiers. From favela funk MC Carol ft. Heavy Baile, a single named after the councilwoman (“I am

Marielle, Claudia, I am Marisa / I am the black woman that could be your daughter”⁸) to Evangelical Pastor Henrique Vieira: “Jesus. Black, slum-dweller from Nazareth. Marielle. Black, slum-dweller from Maré”⁹.

International pop singer Katy Perry also paid tribute to Marielle Franco during the passage of her ‘Witness The Tour’ in Brazil. Singing a song called “Unconditional Love” while Franco’s photo showed behind on the stage screen and the crowd chanted the councilwoman’s name and claimed for justice and repeated “Marielle Presente”, a motto used on social media and in demonstrations since the crime. Marielle’s sister and daughter joined the singer on stage and were cheered by the public (YouTube, 2018).

In France, there was a free concert in homage to Marielle, which took place on the second of May 2018 in Paris. The concert included popular Brazilian music and its organizers demanded an end to the impunity of those responsible for the crime. The mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, was one of the most active members in recognizing Franco’s achievements and the council of Paris unanimously decided to name a place in Paris after her (TeleSur). The “Hotel de Ville”, Paris’ townhouse, exposed her photo with a caption “*Paris n’oublie pas Marielle Franco*” (Twitter, 2018). Amnesty International France also published multiple articles on the subject, denouncing the serious attack on freedom of speech also represented by her assassination (Amnesty—FR).

The councilwoman was also honored around the globe on International Women’s Day 2018. In Melbourne, many people paraded with signs showing Franco’s face and demanding justice (*The Guardian*, 2019). The same was seen in Milan (Brasil de Fato, 2019), New York and Los Angeles (*Good Black News*, 2019), also including critics of the

⁸ “Eu sou Marielle, Cláudia, eu sou Marisa / Eu sou a preta que podia ser sua filha” (translation by the author)

⁹ “Jesus—negro, favelado, de Nazaré. Marielle, negra, favelada da Maré”

government and a focus on defending LGBT rights. In Buenos Aires, a protest organized by *Coletivo Passarinho* (a group of Brazilians living in the country) took the form of a collage of stickers with Marielle’s name on street signs, referring to the incident in Rio last October.

3.6.1 THE RESPONSE TO MARIELLE’S CASE DURING CARNAVAL

The 2019 Carnival, as mentioned in the introduction of this chapter was also used as a tool to protest the murder. That Carnival is the moment in which politics, social criticism and revelry are mixed by the streets and avenues is no surprise—it is a tradition, after all, dating back to the Portuguese Empire years in Brazil. As Andrews (2018) situates it, racial and ethnic debates were also included in these moments, being part of what he names visual arts. Since whitening was the Latin-American project, and racism was experienced “not in legal form, but as a set of ‘dogmas’ about racial and cultural inferiority” (Alberto and Hoffnung-Garskof, 2018), debates about race, equality, and nation were consequently waged in cultural spaces linked to music, dance, literature—and Carnival (*ibid.*). And, obviously, politics.

From north to the south of Brazil, *blocos* (groups of revelers) and *batucadas* (drums groups) satirized the president, his politician children and members of the Government, and, beyond that, they remembered victims of sexism, racism and homophobia. Carnival nearly overlapped with International Women’s Day and women paraded during carnival with Marielle Franco flags and t-shirts, and some of the *foliãs* (female revelers) wrote on their body “*Ele Não*”—“not him”, an opposition motto against Bolsonaro since 2017.

Nurse (1999) agrees that Carnival as a cultural activity is not only about merriment, colorful pageantry, revelry and street theatre, but “born out of the struggle of marginalized peoples to shape a cultural identity through resistance, liberation and catharsis” (ibid.) regarding conflicts of class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity. And Marielle was ‘the perfect storm’ of minorities: a black, queer woman from the favelas.

Black women in positions of leadership across the Americas have made and continue to make substantial contributions to the Black radical tradition and politics in the Americas (Smith 2016). Yet, these contributions are often erased by a kind of political amnesia:

Political amnesia, the gray area surrounding political agency, partly stems from the erasure of historical figures— particularly those female ancestors who militantly fought as racial and gender outsiders for democracy, only to be marginalized later from ‘respectable’ political community (James, 1999 in Smith, 2016).

Pushing back this “political amnesia” is one of the reasons to continue talking about Marielle and her legacy, to fight for justice, to combat fake news about her, to engage in Black Feminism and topics related to gendered racial democracy and an intrinsic culture of *machismo*. Pushing back a State that allows or facilitates the killing of women doing their jobs, trying to speak their truths and collaborating for a fairer society is not only inhumane— it is plain stupid, a waste of resources, competence and brains.

FIELDWORK

Two feminist NGOs in Brazil were analyzed during the development of this thesis. Through fieldwork—meaning direct observation and interviews with members of these organizations—it was possible to get to know more about them, institutions with completely different profiles and contexts: *Geledés Instituto da Mulher Negra* and *Associação Filhas do Boto Nunca Mais* (AFBNM).

The differences between these two organizations were one of the main reasons they were chosen: Geledés is a trailblazing feminist NGO in Brazil, one of the first female black civil societies in Latin America, which has long worked with public organizations in the economic center of the country. AFBNM, in contrast, is new, quickly gaining space in the social space of a relatively isolated and considerably smaller city. While some feminist organizations in the country are not willing to collaborate with this specific kind of research—the famous Brazilian NGO “Think Olga”, for example, states on their website that it “adopts the policy of not attending to academic requests”—both Geledés and AFBNM were very collaborative and receptive to research, observation, and interviews. The two NGOs clearly position themselves against political gender-based violence very actively on the web and social media, which was an important tool in order keep following their recent accomplishments and actions.

ASSOCIAÇÃO FILHAS DO BOTO NUNCA MAIS:

“Associação Filhas do Boto Nunca Mais” is a relatively young, but thriving organization in Porto Velho, the capital of Rondônia—it was created in 2016 as a collective

and promoted to an association (a “promotion” in terms of Brazilian legal classification) earlier this year. Located South of the Amazon and two hours away from Bolivia, Porto Velho is a mix of indigenous, northeastern, and southern cultures. The association’s name might sound weird at first: it means “Never again daughters of the *boto*” in Portuguese. *Botos* are the pink dolphins typical of the Amazon rivers; they are very common in Rondônia. Its meaning comes back from the origin of the NGO, when founder Anne Cleyanne Alves and other psychology graduate students of UNIR (Federal University of Rondônia) went to the riverside areas of the Madeira river to provide physiological consults to the communities. They realized that besides immense abuse—sexual, moral, physical—these women were not even entitled to speak out loud about their children’s paternity when it involved rape or premarital sex.

The legend of *Boto* has indigenous origin, part of the Brazilian folklore. Legend says that the *boto* transforms itself into an elegant young man on full moon nights. “He” chooses the most beautiful woman of the community—generally a teenager—and takes her to the river, where he impregnates her and then leaves. For this reason, the Boto Legend is often used to justify an out-of-wedlock pregnancy. In addition, it is usually said that “the child is the daughter/son of the *boto*” when it is a child of unknown father. Even in the 21st Century, this myth is still used as a disguise to avoid talking about and dealing with rape and other crimes against women in the riverside communities.

Rondônia is the 3rd Brazilian state in terms of femicide. However, as Alves has pointed out, the governor wife’s office has more employees than the team of people responsible for fighting for gender issues in the state. The association was created to try to contest this disparity at some level. What began as a university project became an institution

when the father of one of the patients started to threaten the team. This necessity to institutionalize led the group to become a Collective—that earlier in this year evolved to an association. While still in the process of writing their by-laws, Alves highlights the fight against political gender-based violence as one of their goals: the agenda is also an homage to environmental leader Nilce “Nicinha” de Souza Magalhães, who was killed in 2016 defending riverside communities that were affected by the construction of power plants in the Madeira River (Santo Antônio and Jirau) in Porto Velho. Actively working against the construction of the dams—that displaced hundreds along the riverside communities—Nicinha’s body was found in the river that she defended, with hands and feet tied to ropes and stones (MAB, 2016). As Alves put, “it was not only a crime, it was a symbolic, clear message to those who fought against the industry¹⁰”

When asked about the situation of women inside political parties in the state, the director answered that: “[here] women must submit to the parties’ wishes—they attract votes, but they do not represent her values. I have been interrupted and bropropriated¹¹ within the National Human Rights Council! The system attempts to erase the woman intellectually. We have *one* female federal deputy and *one* state deputy—but they do not take women’s agendas on, they take what their parties determine”. However, she reminds us that in the meantime, they might not be candidates, but they are voters—and have the power to pressure parties to address women’s issues.

Regarding Marielle Franco’s assassination, there was an official position on the page of the association—on what they described as “the double violence”: not only her death but

¹⁰ “A morte da Nicinha não foi só um crime, foi um símbolo, uma mensagem praqueles que lutam contra as companhias hidrelétricas”.

¹¹ *Bropropriation* or *hepeating* is the practice of a man taking the credit for a woman’s idea, either by repeating or stealing her idea as his (BBC, 2017).

the attempt to diminish her. An act of "Mina Livre", another NGO in Porto Velho, honored Marielle and the association joined them on the streets. The group also reported a lawyer who published fake news against Marielle, sending it to her team. They organized a small group to denounce fake news in Porto Velho. "Marielle was a seed, when they killed her, they had no idea they were planting a seed", said Anne Cleyanne.

The organization also stands against homophobia, celebrating on May 17th the International Day of Struggle Against LGBT-phobia, besides taking on their agenda of fighting child sexual abuse by doing what they call "pit stops" (small interventions) in public spaces against child abuse, in partnership with the municipal pediatric hospital. Their major strategies, at least for now—says Alves—is organizing public interventions, being active on social media, and working in school and academic centers to diffuse information and raise consciousness. Following this approach, last March was the Month of Interventions Against Femicide, in homage to Women's International Day. Using the most popular public space of the city (a closed avenue transformed into a space directed to sports and leisure) they performed poetry, made speeches and laid dozens of signs with messages written by walk-by women in solidarity with femicide victims. In the background, there was a big banner with Marielle's face.

The association has a yearly goal and a monthly agenda of specific activities. This year's goal is intervening in school communities, working on issues such as child abuse, consensus, affection, acceptance, and bullying—especially regarding the female students. The director says that they intend to bridge the gap that public institutions don't. Luckily, they might soon have access to a more institutional response: Last April, Alves was elected to lead the Municipal Council for Children and Adolescents Rights, vowing to promote

community action and develop more research. As she said during the interview: "Without data we do not make public policies". The organization also supports an academic league of 42 students and researchers who study social control through the myth of female rivalry and the male belief that "women are the extension of their bodies". "Information is liberation", says Alves.

While many feminist organizations—to be honest, most NGOS—are taking a step back with the new government and rise of extreme right in the country, "Filhas do Boto Nunca Mais" are an exception. Two of their members recently won chairs at the Regional Council of Psychology (CPR) and in celebration of International Mother's Day they are promoting meetings about obstetric violence and women's power of choice regarding their bodies. When asked about the association's evolution in only a few years, Alves attributed their success to the collaboration among different NGOs in the city and the fact that the community embraced their work, since there was a vacuum, a need for an initiative contemplating women's causes.

GELEDÉS INSTITUTO DA MULHER NEGRA

Geledés Black Women's Institute is based in São Paulo—the largest and most populous city in Brazil, economic capital of the country. Geledés is the biggest black feminist NGO in Latin America. Active since 1988, it is a civil society organization that stands "in defense of women and black people, understanding that these two social segments suffer from disadvantages and discriminations in their access to social opportunities due to the racism and sexism prevailing in Brazilian society", as stated by their institutional mission.

Geledés also places itself against all other forms of discrimination that limit the achievement of full citizenship, such as lesbophobia, homophobia, regional prejudices, prejudices against religions, opinion and social class (Geledés, 2016).

Starting from this perspective, Geledés' priority areas are racial issues, gender issues, the implications of these issues for human rights, education, health, communication, the labor market, academic research and public policies (ibid.). The organization also administers the Geledés website, "a space of public expression of the actions carried out by the organization in the past and present" (ibid.).

Being head of a black feminist organization, Carneiro also mentioned the "racial democracy" myth that is still present in Brazilian discourse as one of the biggest challenges to fight racism. This relates to Alberto and Hoffnung-Garskof's understanding of racism as an inheritance of nation-state formation: In this understanding, sublimating and denying racism is part of the establishment of homogenous culture with the excuse of nationalism, of being one people under one flag—a discourse heavily used when talking about racial democracy in Brazil, firstly by Gilberto Freyre (*Casa-Grande & Senzala*, 1933) and later on by American scholars.

The myth of racial democracy not only shadows the debate on racism, it also makes the lives of black activists and organizations more difficult: it is harder, after all, to fight a matter that supposedly, officially, does not exist. And this can be traced to Marielle's assassination. As summarized by Gopinah, "Women's bodies, then, become crucial to nationalist discourse in that they serve not only as the site of biological reproduction of national collectivities, but as the very embodiment of this nostalgically evoked communal past and tradition" (Gopinah, 1997: 468)—and since great part of the Brazilian nationalist

discourse is that we live in a land of all colors and ethnicities, a harmony attributed to racial democracy, it contributes (besides the previously discussed belief that women's space should be restricted to domestic spheres) to putting the lives of anti-racist, black empowerment activists and representatives in danger.

However, coordinator of the education program (and interviewee) Suelaine Carneiro admits that they have significantly reduced their reach since Dilma Rousseff's 2016 impeachment. The tone in the interview was pessimistic. When asked about the positioning of Geledés on political gender-based violence, Carneiro said that there are many forms of it and that the organization is preoccupied with the theme, but while there are timid advances—specific laws for attacks towards human rights activists—“This narrative does not change—we cannot sensitize the society nor explain the importance of Human Rights”.

When asked about the how the organization works to achieve its goals with public actors, community and private initiative, Carneiro declared that all political goals were compromised and/or frozen, with Geledés' withdrawing from public bodies. There was, according to her, a perceivable setback in human rights since the 2016 impeachment. There are no more guarantees that public policies will be realized. What they are doing now is acting as a civil society, trying to contain their losses—example, vetoing Constitutional Amendment 95¹². Back in 2018 (when the interview was conducted) Geledés biggest goal was denouncing the increase of social inequalities, talking to public power such as Public Federal Ministry and—most of all—dialoguing with the population in that election year.

The association followed the presidential election with much concern, in panic due to the rise of Bolsonaro and the far right. "It is a protest vote [against the PT government] that is

¹² Constitutional Amendment 95 would freeze public expenditures with primary expenditures for 20 years. There is no adjustment, only maintenance, and the increasing demand for resources will likely not be able to be met the demand, probably leaving millions of Brazilians who depend on social benefits helpless.

actually a vote against itself," she adds. "It brings back the discourse of racism, sexism, xenophobia. This is a very delicate moment; institutions of law are very fragile. These candidates lead to an increasingly violent policy, with license to kill and act limitlessly in the peripheries and favelas".

They had several seats in public forums, mainly at the federal level, but left with the coup of 2016. "These spaces are being used to validate the coup government, so Geledés and the Articulation of Brazilian Black Women (AMNB) quitted as a consensus", said her. Today the NGO only has a seat in the ethnic racial forum of São Paulo. It is the opposite scenario to what Geledés lived in the early 2000s, during the UN and Durban conferences and solid articulation of civil society movements. There was a great production of research and resources, and the creation of the Ministry of Racial Equality during the Lula government was an example that Brazil exported to other countries—the currently declining South-South cooperation.

Event at a slower pace, Geledés continues to contest gender violence in Brazil. Last March, ABONG (Brazilian Association of Non-Governmental Organizations) held panels about civil society organizations and Carneiro was one of the main panelists. In late March, antiracism organizations including Geledés had a conference with Rio de Janeiro's Assembly's president, Rodrigo Maia. The agenda included social security reform, anti-crime measures that could endanger black communities and the current government's threats to terminate racial quotas policies in Public Universities—even though gender issues were not directly addressed, the meeting was led by three black congresswomen (PSOL-RJ Aurea Carolina and Talíria Petrone, and PT-RJ Benedita da Silva).

At the end of the interview, after explaining that Geledés cannot directly campaign for a specific candidate—but affirming that they act by giving space and trying to shine light on black female candidates—Carneiro concluded that their hope is in slowly, gradually mobilizing and awakening the population regarding the importance of human rights. Which she admits is frequently “a one step forward, one step back” process. And when asked what the most difficult part of her job was: [the most difficult part] is never being able to take a break. Being black and being a woman requires being doubly conscious of the fight and of the necessity to fight¹³”.

CONCLUSION: POSSIBLE WAYS TO FIGHT POLITICAL GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE:

The main objective of this thesis has been understanding how gender-based violence has undercut female political empowerment in Brazil. The case studies show us that independently of regional particularities, classes, ages, and education levels, the danger of being a woman in activism and/or politics is always present and significantly unaddressed. The long timeline, in other hand, confirms that even though advances have been made in terms of laws and consciousness (at least in some spheres) the political problems that women faced in the 1960s are very much like of those we confront in 2019.

In the cultural and social realms, it seems quite clear that political gender-based violence is intrinsically connected to common *machismo*, the Latin version of sexism: the

¹³ “É não poder descansar nunca... ser negra e ser mulher significa ter dupla consciência da luta e da necessidade de lutar” (August 28th, 2018, São Paulo—Personal Interview)

patriarchal order imposes that women are not entitled to their bodies and full freedom, let alone positions of leadership and political prominence. The first chapter demonstrates that the issue is not limited to Brazil, but actually encompass the whole region—presented data, reports and organizations back up this conclusion and suggest that addressing the problem regionally could be productive. However, since 2015, with the election of right-wing governments in several South American countries, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUL) has lost relevance and the recently created Prosul (Forum for the Development and Progress of South America) has a conservative nature that likely will not include gender and minority agendas (RFI, 2019; Galhardo and Wetermean, 2019; Politize, 2019). In the typical Brazilian tendency of ‘two steps forward, one step behind’, the Organization of American States (OAS) provides a ray of hope regarding gender-based violence issues, presenting regional statistics and following up on the Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI). OAS highlights that while 32 of the 34 member states of the OAS have ratified the Convention—“and are thus committed to adopt ‘without delay’ measures to protect women” (OAS, 2015)—only 8 of these 32 countries have comprehensive laws on violence against women, with a majority of laws still touching only on intra-family violence. This data was released in a report whose name recaps the situation of women in the continent: “Fighting Gender Violence: Some Advances, Many Setbacks” (OAS, 2015).

In more tangible aspects, such as financial capacities of empowerment, Brazil faces a perfect storm of a) being a developing country, b) being in the middle of an economic recession, c) presenting the 9th worst rate of social inequality in the world (OXFAM, 2017) and d) having a gradual retrocession in social benefits (ibid.).

In parallel, as Brysk reveals, “Brazil has intensified the formula that seems to drive gender violence in middle-range modernizing societies worldwide: a toxic brew of growing inequality, rising insecurity, contested globalization, and conflicted urbanization” (2018). The strength of this argument increases when individually analyzing the formula’s four agents.

Inequality, as briefly mentioned above is one of the most palpable challenges that the country has faced for hundreds of years (OXFAM 2018). Despite some evolution in terms of wealth distribution—mostly through social assistance—in the first decade of this century, the pace is sluggish, and the country is still listed as one of the most unequal countries on the planet. “In Brazil, someone earning the minimum monthly wage would have to work 19 years to make the same money a Brazilian from the richest 0.1% of the population makes in one month” (ibid.).

Regarding insecurity, American consulting company Gallup released a study in 2018 revealing that the feeling of insecurity of Brazilian people ranks better than only three countries: Venezuela, Gabon and Afghanistan. Just 31% of Brazilians in 2017 said they feel safe walking alone in their area at night (Gallup, 2018). This, combined with the fact that Latin America has the lowest percentage of confidence in local police—42%, in contrast to the world average of 70%—and occupying the 17th place in worst *Law and Order Index Score* (ibid.) explains a lot about Brazilian (lack of) security. Besides the well-known case of Rio, coast cities such as Fortaleza and Natal reach the ranking of the most dangerous in the world (Revista Cear, 2019) and their citizens live in a state of 24/7 vigilance.

Secondly, insecurity is strongly linked to conflicted urbanization. The country has rapidly urbanized since the 1960s, reaching almost 86% in 2014 according to the United

Nations—12% more urbanization than in 1990. São Paulo, the fifth most populous metropolis in the world grows approximately 1.4% per year in numbers of residents (UN, 2014:26). The fast transition from rural to urban spaces has a social and financial cost: The World Bank calculates that in 2016, 22.3% of the Brazilian population lived in the favelas, accounting for over 46 million people living in spaces where the access to basic services (such as sanitation, structurally safe houses in, garbage collection, and water supply) are frequently limited. Associated with drug trafficking, militia corruption, and a police force with limited access which often abuses its power, the lack of infrastructure leads to more insecurity issues.

While optimist views of globalization stand that gender equality—and women’s participation in politics—is parallel to economic growth, such studies take into consideration overall equity, but don’t delve much into the issue of violence (Brysk, 2019:37). When the relation between gender violence and modernization is studied in a more pragmatic way, researchers don’t often go beyond the sphere of domestic violence (ibid.). Beyond that, effects of modernization include fierce changes such as distribution of resources, migration, ruptures in traditions and—according to a skeptical view of globalization—structural changes in the nation-state. Drastic changes inevitably generate backlashes, resulting in more violence that reaches women in leadership positions as well. Anti-globalization movements are frequently associated with ultranationalist, populist and/or conservative political waves and Brazil is not an exception to the rule: in fact, the political turn to extreme right meets the three last arguments highlighted by the author.

The case studies discussed in this thesis also demonstrate the constant relationship between evolving political struggle and gender-based violence, resulting in a plurality of

political gender-based types, but also a repertoire for responses: each one of the four women highlight a particular kind of violence against women. The murder of Dorothy Stang came out of the environment protection struggle; Zuzu Angel's killing was caused by her fight against dictatorship; Patricia Acioli's assassination came out of combating corruption; At last, Marielle's death resulted from fighting for a more transparent use of force by the state, for protecting marginalized people that are the most affected by police violence.

So, after all, **what are the possible ways to improve women's situation in Brazil**, or in a broader spectrum, Latin America? As mentioned before, the issues faced by the women in each case study are not far from the reality of millions of women in 2019. The current political struggle regarding women's rights—in fact, all forms of human rights—is real and probably has never been more important than now in the Brazilian democratic period (from 1985 on). When a government Ministry of Health issues an official dispatch vetoing the use of the term "gynecological violence" because it is supposedly linked to a "socialist ideology" (Cancian, 2019), Marielle's struggle for more humane childbirth and women's rights over their own bodies is still needed. When Greenpeace conducts an evaluation on the performance of the executive in its first 100 days in relation to environmental issues and can already ascertain that there were clear setbacks on its agenda (Greenpeace, 2019), Dorothy's lifework is remembered—and missed. When Amnesty International launches the alert that the anti-human rights discourse that marked the entire political trajectory of Bolsonaro, including the 2018 electoral campaign, is beginning to materialize in measures and actions that threaten and violate the rights human rights of all people in Brazil, the fight of the four women in thesis gains more importance (Amnesty International, 2019).

This author's fieldwork also reminds us that in the Brazilian context, women's rights often follow the path of two steps forward, one step back: while an organization such as FDBNM gains force in a relatively isolated region of Brazil, a trailblazer one such as Geledés retrocedes. This comparison gives us reasons to worry if women's rights won't end up stuck on a "one step forward, two steps back" pattern, and reminds us that everything that is within our grasp must be done to reverse this hazard.

Following the logic of the formula previously discussed, it makes sense to tackle the four elements (inequality, contested urbanization, contested globalization, and insecurity) leading to violence, individually and as a group:

Possible ways to improve women's situation in Brazil/Latin America:

- Fighting against inequality, by adopting public policies that walk towards social and income equality; women's rights also benefit with a decreasing gender pay gap, more economic independency and empowerment. Countries in the top 10 ranking of income equality such as Austria, Canada, and Slovenia are also among those with the least women's violence prevalence (OECD, 2019). While there is not a complete overlap in the two lists—for example, the country with the most even income distribution in 2014, Czech Republic, has a 20% rate of violence against women in their lifetime—the existing links between income equality and women's rights are promising (ibid.).

- Media and social pressure: in times of “Me Too”, “Time’s Up”, “Ninguna A Menos”, media and particularly social media develop an important role in the diffusion of feminism, in the popularization of terms related to it and in diffusing a different mindset for younger generations—and possibly causing some changes for older ones. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, “While women are still underrepresented in media generally, social media encourages a more level playing field, allowing for the voices of women from a wider array of backgrounds and countries, with or without traditional power, to be heard” (CFR, 2018).

Either giving women a platform to speak out about sexual abuse or presenting pop feminism through singers and artists, social media has opened a new frontier for women’s rights organizing, encouraging solidarity and emphasizing shared experiences and personal stories in lieu of sterile data or general news. Modern media also enables women’s rights groups to collaborate online, besides making civil society and organizations (such as Geledés and FDBNM) more accessible to general audiences. Likewise, in times where the motto “representation matters” is slowly becoming a universal truth (or at least a trend), girls around the world have had the access in the last two years to two blockbuster female superhero movies (*Wonder Woman* and *Captain Marvel*) breaking box office records around the world. While it seems like a timid advance, popular cultural phenomena like those were something that girls from previous generations hardly saw on the big screens.

- Sorority/Sororidad: “*¿Qué sería de nosotras sin nuestras amigas? ¿Qué sería de las mujeres sin el amor de las mujeres?*” This quote by Marcela Lagarde, wondering

about what women would do without their female friends and the love they share, translates the spirit of sorority. The term is usually associated, in the English-speaking world, to female university Greek groups—but in Feminist Studies, *sorority* means the feminist alliance between women. It is a subjective experience between women in pursuit of positive and healthy relationships, building existential and political alliances with other women, to contribute to the social elimination of all forms of oppression and mutual support to achieve the vital empowerment of each woman (Lagarde, 2009).

Sorority is the critical awareness of misogyny and also the collective effort to destroy the mentality and the sexist culture that aims to strain solidarity between women—the old myth that every woman competes with each other for the attention of men. As put by author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: “We raise girls to see each other as competitors not for jobs or accomplishments, which I think can be a good thing, but for the attention of men” (Ngozi Adichie, 2013). Sorority is a tool to demystify this social construction.

- Educating feminist children, fighting against toxic masculinity imposed on children from infancy: since gender-based violence is strongly associated with the prevalence of *machismo* in Latin America and general sexism around the world, it seems intelligent to nip this evil in the bud, raising boys and girls to be feminist, not reducing someone’s rights and place in society by their gender. The fight against toxic masculinity—the fuel behind a great share of toxic relationship and forms of abuse, behind homophobia and transphobia—is equally important.

The current political and social contexts are not promising for short-term changes, for the reasons brought up in chapter 1 and the end of chapter 3, even though there exists a glimmer of hope: Bolsonaro just sanctioned changes in the Maria da Penha law. The new decree allows the perpetrator to be immediately removed from the home, residence, or place of coexistence, even without the determination of a judge if there is a current or imminent risk to the life or physical integrity of the victim. This also allows more agility in decision making by the Justice and Police authorities (EXAME, 2019b; Folha de São Paulo, 2019b).

Finally, it is important to reiterate that in order to achieve significant and permanent progress in the women's rights agenda, a holistic approach including the whole society, is necessary. As well put by OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro: "The eradication of violence against women requires the commitment of the entire society—the government, through education, development and security, as well as support mechanisms for women; the media (public and private); advertising agencies; the private sector; companies and associations; and, indeed, a main actor, civil society—to the task of questioning existing gender roles and proposing new pattern where both men and women can live in equality, justice, and without violence." (OAS, 2015)

FINAL THOUGHTS:

Marielle Franco's death was a political crime, as extensively pointed out by the media, human rights groups, and the multitudes of private citizens who expressed their outrage in political action and on social media. While this is unquestionably true, and the intersectionality she embodied and represented clearly was in the picture—but this aspect

was significantly less discussed by traditional media and political institutions. From the first national responses to her murder, to the defamation and *fake news* about her that inundated social medias less than 24 hours after the crime, there was something particular about her death. By diminishing the crime because of her sexual orientation or the fact that the councilwoman was a former teenage mother, the nature of the murder as a manifestation of political gender-based violence would become clearer. There are clear signs that the reason she was most targeted was due to her agency in unveiling an ugly, powerful truth that could impact equally powerful people. It was political, it is a fact. Nonetheless, Marielle was more vulnerable than her male counterparts doing same work or type of investigation. Franco was not framed in the mainstream white male straight cis political order that she lived in.

In the traditional perspective, she was not *supposed to be there*, as a Lula's era legacy, somehow escaping the favela reality to an academic one, then continuing to human rights civil and state organisms, finally reaching a democratically elected political office. Brazil's persistent patriarchal society was not—and clearly it is still not—ready to give someone like Marielle the proper space to enable her full potential. The same way, this society was not ready to deal with a divorced mother as a successful and influential professional like Zuzu. It wasn't prepared to protect someone who was, by her turn, protecting vulnerable people and the environment of the country she adopted as her own. There are hundreds, thousands of Zuzus, Dorothys, Patricias and Marielles resisting and being silenced everywhere.

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