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## **The Perfect Misogynist Storm and The Electromagnetic Shape of Feminism: Weathering Brazil's Political Crisis**

By Cara K. Snyder<sup>1</sup> and Cristina Scheibe Wolff<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

In Brazil, the 2016 coup against Dilma Rousseff and the Worker's Party (PT), and the subsequent jailing of former PT President Luis Ignacio da Silva (Lula), laid the groundwork for the 2018 election of ultra-conservative Jair Bolsonaro. In the perfect storm leading up to the coup, the conservative elite drew on deep-seated misogynist discourses to oust Dilma Rousseff, Brazil's progressive first woman president, and the Worker's Party she represented. Imprisoning Lula and preventing him from running solidified the effects of the coup and opened the field to the right wing. In this article, we track the roots of the elite's 2016 power grab back to colonization and through various stages of Brazil's political history. Tracing the contours of women's movements alongside this history of domination reveals both the configurations of feminist agendas in Brazil and transformations of power. We draw on our experiences as scholars and activists to argue that Brazil's current crisis has created an opportunity for solidarity that has drawn academic and activist feminists closer. Namely, amidst this crisis, we see a coming together of various women's movements including Afro-Brazilian women, peasant women, indigenous women, and student groups. The unity among movements is made evident through the 2017 Women's Worlds March for Rights, which the authors of this paper organized and attended, as well as #EleNão and 8M. In post-coup Brazil and throughout Latin America, women have been the face of the resistance to an encroaching fascism; this battle will require sustained opposition and continued deepening of solidarities.

*Keywords:* coup d'état, Dilma Rousseff, Brazilian Feminisms, Women's Worlds March for Rights (*Marcha Mundos de Mulheres por Direitos*), 13th Women's Worlds Congress/ 11<sup>th</sup> Fazendo Genero, solidarity, academic feminism, activist feminism, feminist waves, Brazilian women's movements, crisis

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## Introduction<sup>3</sup>

It is an electric moment for Latin American feminisms. Feminists from across the Americas have sparked broad-based campaigns for change; campaigns that are crystalized, but not contained, in hashtags like #niunamenos and #abortolegalia. In Latin America's largest democracy, Brazil, women have been at the forefront of mass movements for social justice. These movements are met with and respond to opposing forces of conservatism, sexism, racism, and elitism. We propose electric currents—in the form of misogynist-charged thunderstorms and feminist radio waves—as an apt metaphor to describe the contemporary moment in Brazil. The context of Brazilian politics can be understood as a perfect storm, resulting in the election of ultra-right wing conservative Jair Bolsonaro. To understand the shape of feminist activism amidst this storm, we turn to Nancy Hewitt's radio-waves analogy.

Like the forces that gathered leading up to the 2016 coup d'état in Brazil, storms similarly arise in unstable situations. Lightning and thunder are set off in a moment of friction between the sky and the ground. In Brazil, this watershed was the 2016 coup. Facilitated by transnational networks, Brazil's conservative elite pounced on a volatile moment to oust the Country's progressive first woman president, Dilma Rousseff, and the Worker's Party (the PT) that she represented. Opposition parties employed misogynist discourse during the 2014 elections (Rousseff's second term), and the 2016 coup drew on this discourse to remove Rousseff from office. On the one hand, in the wake of the coup, right-wing politicians, church leaders and media moguls continue to mobilize misogyny in their attempts to maintain power. Such mobilizations have made possible the election of an ultra-conservative, vocally misogynist president, who drew (and continues to draw) power, in large part, from publicly denouncing a supposed "gender ideology." On the other hand, throughout this process, 8M (March 8) protests in 2016, 2017 and 2018, and the movement known as #EleNão,<sup>4</sup> have placed feminism and women's movements as the front line against conservatism. In this context, (re)writing feminist activist genealogies becomes even more urgent.

In writing about women's movements, many scholars apply a "wave" metaphor to describe the feminist goals of a given period. According to this metaphor, first wave feminists (19th century - early 20th century) sought the right to vote; second wave feminist (early 20th century - late 20th century) organized around the Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution, which was proposed but never ratified; and third wave feminists (1990s - early 2000s) focused on individual rights and diversity (Hewitt, 2010). However, this form of structuring feminist mobilizations has been critiqued for its U.S.-centrism and for focusing on the activism of privileged women. Others note that the oceanic wave metaphor homogenizes movements, reinforces kinship systems, represents a progress narrative, and promotes Western, anglophone structure. To avoid the pitfalls, erasures and oversimplifications of mapping women's movements into three oceanic waves, feminist scholars including Nancy Hewitt, Astrid Henry and Ednie Kaeh Garrison, have proposed adopting "electromagnetic wavelengths we call radio waves" as a metaphor to replace the "feminist oceanographic" understanding (Henry, 2010, p. 115). Radio waves are multiple and simultaneous as well as intentional and purposeful - scholars and educators may choose which "frequencies" to tune into. Following this logic, we will explore feminist

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<sup>4</sup> #EleNão ("Not Him") were women-led protests against Jair Bolsonaro.

activism in transnational Brazil before and after the 2016 coup, emphasizing the multiple voices and demands that stem from differences in women's experiences across gender, class, race, and sexuality.<sup>5</sup>

Taking the most recent coup d'état as a point of departure to explore women's movements, we begin by establishing a historical context for the conservative backlash that resulted in the ousting of then-president Dilma Rousseff. Then we trace feminist advocacy through periods of dictatorship and into the *Primavera Feminista*, the Feminist Spring, listening for divergent waves. After describing four campaigns in particular--SlutWalks, Afro-Brazilian Women's organizing, Peasant Women Workers, and student movements--the authors draw from our own experiences as organizers and participants of the 13th Women's Worlds Congress/11th *Fazendo Gênero* (hereafter WWC/FG) and the 2017 *Marcha Mundos de Mulheres por Direitos* (Women's Worlds March for Rights, hereafter MMMD), and also as participants to 8M and #EleNão movements, to highlight several developments in post-coup feminism. Specifically, our study highlights unfolding solidarities among women's movements, as well as merging waves of academic and activist feminists. These changes in the shape of feminist theory and praxis in Brazil are motivated by crises. Crises, in turn, are motivated by persistent, omnipresent misogyny.

### The "Right" Conditions for the Misogynist Storm: A Historical Context

In order for us to grasp the magnitude of Brazil's 2016 coup d'état, as well as its gendered implications, we must understand some fundamental data about the country. Brazil holds the title for the fifth largest territory in the world in terms of land. It boasts great biological and cultural diversity. The census (2010) counts over 200 million inhabitants, more than half of whom are people of African descent.<sup>6</sup> Indigenous presence is striking and manifold, despite the historical extermination of these peoples. Women comprise more than half of the population.<sup>7</sup> In addition to its diversity, Brazil is known for its inequality. This inequality is an inheritance of slavery and the construction of a white elite. This elite has maintained hegemonic control over economics, politics, and cultural norms since European colonization, allying itself with international groups linked to financial and industrial capital, and using police and military force, usually against any insurgency by the popular classes.<sup>8</sup> Brazil's elite built and sustained power with great control over the institutions that manufacture and disseminate ideologies, such as churches, media, and, to a large extent, the educational system; these systems have been used to dominate women, black and indigenous people, and poor people, and to situate them as second-class citizens (Faoro, 1979; Miguel, 2017).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "Transnational Brazil" recognizes that the nation is an unstable category of analysis (Seigel, 2005), informed by multi-directional, asymmetrical flows of people, ideas, goods. We use this term to clarify that even as we refer to Brazil as a geography, we recognize nations and borders as unfixed and in flux.

<sup>6</sup> People of African descent are referred to in Brazil as *preto*, or black, and *pardo*, or mixed.

<sup>7</sup> Updated demographic information about Brazil can be found via the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (The Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics): <https://coup.ibge.gov.br/>

<sup>8</sup> The Portuguese colonized the territory now commonly referred to as Brazil in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The country was also the target of intense European immigration from Portugal, Spain, Italy, Germany and others during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, motivated in great part by the governing elite's eugenic goals for national whitening. This population is especially concentrated in south and southeastern regions of Brazil. Today approximately 53% of the population identify as black or "*pardo*" (or, mixed), according to IBGE, the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics.

<sup>9</sup> One clear example of this is the public university system in Brazil, whose students are almost all white and who come from the middle and upper classes. The elite's dominance over the universities was challenged by quotas for

Following the proclamation of the Republic of Brazil in 1889, issued by way of a military coup that came shortly after the abolition of slavery, the country experienced a republican oligarchy.<sup>10</sup> Until the end of the 1920s, women, soldiers, and illiterate people did not vote. Political leaders carefully controlled and ultimately decided election results. Getúlio Vargas, a so-called “populist” president, rose to power through two coups and held power from 1930 to 1945.<sup>11</sup> In 1934, women’s vote was admitted, after suffragist movements. Working women were also organizing in unions, as well as in anarchist and communist groups, since the 1920s. The early 1900s marked a shift in gender ideology at the national level, and these changes varied depending on class. In *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil 1914 - 1940*, Susan K. Besse finds that changes in the years between the first and second world wars were contradictory; for instance, middle and upper class women were encouraged to be educated, enter the work force and contribute to the economy so long as their contributions did not detract from motherhood. In this way, gender ideologies “were moderniz[ed] without fundamentally upsetting the structure of inequality” (p. 11) and middle- and upper-class women became complicit in patriarchy, reconstructed.

From 1945 to 1964, Brazil implemented democratic systems including direct elections and multipartyism. It was a time also marked by urbanization, modernization and industrialization, and by the formation of important social movements, such as the Peasant Leagues, Trade Union Centers, and a (quite combative) student movement. At this time there were no claims on feminism by these popular movements, but women were there in significant numbers. Women were active in movements against hunger, and with an increasing number of women in universities, they were at the forefront of student movements, as well. Then in 1964--against the backdrop of the Cold War, motivated by fear of the Cuban Revolution, and fomented by the United States--the military carried out yet another coup. Once again the military assumed power under the guise of “revolution.” The dictatorship lasted 21 years. Those in power stayed in power until they “retired,” initiating a process called “opening” and that culminated in the indirect election of Tancredo Neves in 1985.

During the military regime, heroic resistance movements, including armed militant factions, fought against a conservative coalition comprised of large businesses, the majority of the Catholic Church, and broad middle class sectors, all of whom supported the regime. The state repressed insurgent efforts via “legal” mechanisms such as those instituted in 1968 by Institutional Act number 5 (AI5), which allowed the police or army to arrest without justification or injunction any person suspected of subversion. Those arrested were either “disappeared” or tried by military court. The National Truth Commission (Brazil, 2014; “CNV - Comissão Nacional Da Verdade,” 2014) verifies that such vicious subjugation affected countless numbers of people, many of whom were women. Violent repression, in turn, generated another type of movement based on human rights ideas, with international repercussions (Green, 2010, p. 468). Women participated in these

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black students and students from public schools. In the Bolsonaro administration, however, the new Minister of Education, Ricardo Velez Rodriguez declared that “Universities should be reserved for an intellectual elite,” making clear the retrogression proposed by this government in relation to educational policies (Carta Educação, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Brazil was the last country in the Americas to abolish this form of compulsory labor.

<sup>11</sup> The first is called the Revolution of 1930 and one of the politicians involved was the author of the famous phrase: “let us make the revolution, before the people do it ...”; the second blow of 1937 created the so-called New State, of fascist inspiration.

resistance movements, both in political organization and armed struggle, and, even more visibly, in human rights organizations (Wolff et. al, 2016; Pedro et. al, 2011).<sup>12</sup>

As diverse groups of women became protagonists of resistance movements and militant leftist groups, feminism reached these and other circles of women. While women activists in Brazil clearly practiced feminism, news from abroad about the movements in the United States and Europe introduced the term feminist theory to certain circles.<sup>13</sup> This happened chiefly after 1975 in Brazil and later in the other countries of the Southern Cone, when the dictatorial regime was already well established, and had defeated the armed resistance groups, with the arrest, death or exile of the men and women who were part of these movements (Ferreira e Gomes Silva, 2017). Feminist literature (such as those of Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Juliet Mitchell), named sexist oppression. Later, exiled students or women leaders returned to Brazil, where they implemented practices like consciousness-raising groups.

*Afro-Brasileiras*, connected to women around the globe, were among the first to link colonialism to sexist and racist oppression (Nascimento, 2016, p. 62). Black women's groups introduced incisive critique of an early feminist movement that ignored their experiences, and they have been at the forefront of exposing the myth of racial democracy in the post dictatorship periods (Caldwell, 2007, p. 152).<sup>14</sup> These groups of women were organized mainly from the black movements, confronting both the black men who refused feminism, which they viewed as diversionist, and the feminist groups that did not at the time open space for racial discussion. Women of the African diaspora, with Brazilian women playing key roles, have both tapped into international human rights frameworks and uncovered the ways they fail to account for women who are marginalized on multiple accounts (Franklin, 2011). An example of this is Robin Morgan's compendium *Sisterhood is Global* (1984), which sought to bring together feminist women from all over the world who spoke for their countries; but the choice of white and middle-class women demonstrated an ignorance of the potentialities of black feminism that already presented its specific claims. Many of the feminists of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were concerned only with the limitations and discriminations imposed on their gender, not realizing that other women endured oppression multiplied by racialization and poverty. Sueli Carneiro, Lelia Gonzales, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, bell hooks, and other academics gave way to the production of knowledge and knowledge through this perspective, denouncing the situation of black women and their erasure. Intersectional approaches, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (Crenshaw, 1991; Crenshaw, 2012) but which builds on a long genealogy of women of color theorizing about the

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<sup>12</sup> These questions have been elaborated in the research and publications of the Laboratory of Gender and History Studies of UFSC, which one of the authors is a part of. It would be impossible to summarize these studies, but it is important to note that this process affected Brazil in a synchronistic way to what was happening in other South American countries, especially Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay, where the same type of dictatorship was established, based on the doctrine of National Security, propagated by the United States. These dictatorships were regimes that sought economic modernization of countries, while proposing conservative values for society, excluding freedom of political expression. This also affected the arrival of feminism that developed in the world from the 1960s, which in those countries had the dictatorship's first enemy.

<sup>13</sup> Mostly to middle- and upper-class women of European descent.

<sup>14</sup> The myth of racial democracy refers to the belief that in Brazil there is no racism because racial discrimination has not been legislated in the same ways it has been in the United States or South Africa, for instance. The *Movimento Negro* in Brazil has fought this myth and has exposed the ways racism in Brazilian society manifests in multiple forms (Gonzales, 2011).

interlocking nature of oppression (Beal, 1970; Anzaldúa, 1987), has gained a central place in this broad debate.<sup>15</sup>

Gradually--especially after the United Nations established the Year of Woman in 1975 (Olcott, 2017)—multiple feminist groups created newspapers, organizations and movements for the rights of women, and they advocated for public policies to advance their efforts (Pedro, 2006, p. 49; Pedro, 2012, pp. 238 - 259). This happened alongside, and as a part of, the institutionalization of feminist advocacy, which also coincided with the re-democratization of Brazil. Democratization was implemented slowly after the amnesty law of 1979, the election of a non-military president in 1985, and the drafting of a new constitution for the country that was enacted in 1988 on the eve of the first direct election for president in 1989. With the creation of Women's Councils, women's secretaries, and a large number of NGOs, women's groups and movements gained public space.<sup>16</sup> It is key to note, however, that the institutionalization of feminist and militant women's movements fundamentally changed their platforms as they were made to fit the norms of NGOs and political parties. But if women's movements changed to accommodate centrist ideas, mainstream social movements also had to expand, to make space for women. Examples of integrations include the Women Farmers' (now Peasants) Movement as well as women's sectors within progressive organizations like trade unions, Landless Movement (*Movimento Sem Terra*, or MST) and political parties.<sup>17</sup>

Between 1990 and 2003, the now democratically-elected governments implemented neoliberal policy. In other words, the government empowered Brazil's financial, industrial and agricultural elite to expand business. They carried out major privatizations, like Vale do Rio Doce, CNS and other state enterprises, and granted international capital full access to both natural resources and the Brazilian financial market (Almeida, 2010).<sup>18</sup> Inequality, however, continued to deepen. Hunger and misery reached an immense proportion of the population, unemployment increased, scholarly opportunity for studies decreased, and racism persevered.

It was no coincidence that the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT), or Workers' Party, which had been contesting elections since the 1980s using discourses closely linked to social movements, finally won the presidency in 2002. The PT's President, Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, was a "first" in many ways: President da Silva is a former trade unionist, a metallurgical worker, a born and raised Northeasterner.<sup>19</sup> Following Lula's second term in office (2003 - 2010, both terms), the PT championed another first: Dilma Rousseff won the election in 2011 and again in 2014, to become the first woman to occupy the presidency of the republic. Although Dilma Rousseff did not consider herself a feminist at the time of her first election, the significant presence of women in

<sup>15</sup> Francis Beal's *Double Jeopardy* (1970) and Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* (1987) are two of the most influential writings to theorize on the intersectional nature of oppression before Crenshaw coined the term.

<sup>16</sup> This process of "institutionalization" of feminism in Brazil and Latin America in general has been the subject of much academic and political discussion. On the one hand it has opened possibilities for concrete gains for women, with the creation of laws, regulatory agencies, specialized police, care centers. On the other hand, becoming an "official" part of the state's apparatus alters the dynamics of feminist groups, committing their leaders to institutional roles, and often limiting the groups' performance (Alvarez, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Of course, such integration is imperfect. See, for instance, Caldeira, 2009, for a discussion of women's involvement in MST. We also note that not all groups of women identify as feminist, preferring to be called "women's movements." Today this picture has changed and more groups identify as feminist, thanks to an expanded definition of what constitutes feminism (Alvarez, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> In 2018, Brazil is undergoing an eerily similar process.

<sup>19</sup> Brazil's Northeastern region has traditionally been marginalized by Brazil's Southern elite. For more on the history and meaning of these regional divides see Weinstein's *The Color of Modernity: São Paulo and the Making of Race and Nation in Brazil* (2015).

the PT and in the social movements that shepherded the party into power enabled a series of policies aimed at women in these PT governments. Perhaps the most important of these policies was the creation of the National Conferences on Policies for Women, which brought together thousands of representatives from all over Brazil to discuss and propose policies throughout the Lula and Rousseff governments (Matos & Alvarez, 2018).

The PT administrations, even if they continued a capitalist economic policy that favored financial capital, agribusiness, large multinational corporations, created a series of social programs that lifted more than 30 million people out of absolute poverty.<sup>20</sup> The PT's policies have benefitted women, especially poor and working class women, in various ways, allowing them to acquire a life commensurate with a higher income level and to secure many basic rights (Boff, 2014). These include the Maria da Penha Law (against domestic violence), the PEC of domestic servants, the Bolsa Família, the Minha Casa Minha Vida program (which prioritized women in the financing of popular houses), and often the possibility of attending universities for women from the popular classes. There is some debate over whether these policies were specifically targeted *for* women, given that the PT initiatives aimed specifically to eradicate poverty. But because women are overrepresented as poor, they stood to benefit the most. Indeed, there is no doubt that policies, including those that ensured rights for marginalized groups and that guaranteed a basic minimum income, disproportionately did benefit women (Fernandes, 2012). Some of these popular measures, however, generated dissatisfaction in the middle class, as was the case with legislation that gave the same labor rights to domestic workers (mostly black women) as other workers; the quota policy in universities and federal institutes, which established that 50% of the spots are preferentially reserved for black and indigenous people as well as students from public schools;<sup>21</sup> and the Bolsa Família program, which gave a small amount of money to low-income families in exchange for proof of their children's school attendance. Resentment from men and women of the more privileged classes became evident in the process of the coup against Rousseff and in the openly anti-feminist positioning of Bolsonaro during elections.

### **The 2016 Coup d'État and its Impacts**

Bolstered by popular support, Dilma Rousseff won a second term in office in 2014. And yet, the seeds of the 2016 coup were sown during that election, via an intense media campaign

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<sup>20</sup> In order to get a sense of what this policy meant, Brazil's GDP, which was the 11th in the world in 2002, became the 6th in the world in 2013. The minimum wage increased from U \$ 86.21 (per month) in 2002 to U \$ 305.00 (per month) in 2014. 18 new federal universities and 426 technological institutes were created (secondary and higher levels), infant mortality fell from 25.3 per thousand in 2002 to 12.9 per thousand in 2012.

<sup>21</sup> This refers to students who completed elementary, middle and high school (*ensino fundamental e medio*, in Portuguese) in the public system, which is a strong indicator of economic class. In Brazil, public secondary schools are viewed as inadequate and are often the least preferred option, while public Universities are generally regarded as the best. As a result, middle class and rich families send their children to private schools until University, where they compete for precious slots in the public systems.

against the then president.<sup>22</sup> The coup,<sup>23</sup> with the characteristics of lawfare,<sup>24</sup> began to take shape, involving a large part of the legislature, the majority media, sectors of the middle classes, sectors of the judiciary and possibly international collaboration in the form of funding right-wing groups such as *Movimento Brasil Livre* (MBL),<sup>25</sup> or the Movement for Free Brazil. Conservative factions expanded structures and trained people, such as Judge Sergio Moro. Misogyny, which had been mobilized against Rousseff since her presidential campaign, played a key role in the coup (Sosa, 2019). The media by and large chose unflattering images that showed Rousseff grimacing, and broadcast these via newspapers, internet sites and television.<sup>26</sup> She was accused of being "too serious," not feminine, and bossy, and at the same time hysterical, and emotionally unstable. Even her sexual orientation came to be called into question on charges of being a lesbian (Sousa, 2016, p. 316).

It is important to remember that Dilma Rousseff was a leftist militant; in her youth she was involved in the armed resistance against the military dictatorship, and she was arrested and was tortured in 1970. Rousseff's political history was used throughout the presidential campaign and during the coup. For example, during the voting process for Rousseff's impeachment in the House of Representatives, then-representative and current president Jair Bolsonaro (PP-RJ) dedicated his "yes" vote with the following statements: "They lost in 64. They lost now in 2016. This is for family and for the innocence of children in the classroom, which the PT never had. Against communism, for our freedom, against the court ruling of São Paulo, in memory of Coronel Carlos Alberto Bilhante Ustra, the terror of Dilma Rousseff" (Falcão, 2016). With this statement, the representative made a direct connection between 1964 - the year of the military coup that led to a 21 year dictatorship - and the moment of this new coup in 2016. He linked both coups to a moral question of family and children's innocence, which is a defense conservative politicians often raise, and justified these actions as necessary to combat communism, an accusation mobilized to discredit the Worker's Party and Dilma Rousseff. Finally, he ended his speech dedicating his vote to the military Coronel who oversaw the DOI-CODI, one of the principal torture sites, between

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<sup>22</sup> As in the case of other Latin American countries, such as Paraguay, the elite were not content to try to regain the political supremacy by voting and the institutions of democracy.

<sup>23</sup> The 2016 Coup was orchestrated as an impeachment process against President Dilma Rousseff, who was accused of using a financial device called the "*pedalada fiscal*," or "fiscal pedaling," to manage the national budget. It is a financial maneuver common to governments around the world that makes a forecast of tax collection, using this projection to predict government spending. Meanwhile several senators and deputies admitted that the process was really political. Dilma Rousseff was cleared of all the accusations of irregularities made against her (Facina, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> Schramm uses the term lawfare to describe the 2016 coup realized through a campaign by conservatives waged against the PT involving intensive and combined use of the judicial system and the media. Schramm draws this concept from legal scholar Susan Tiefenbrun who elaborates "lawfare is a weapon designed to destroy the enemy through the use, misuse and abuse of the legal system and the media, to raise the public outcry against that enemy" (Tiefenbrun qtd in Schramm, 2017, p. 3).

<sup>25</sup> The Brazilian Free Movement (MBL), born in 2014 as a "youth" movement, against corruption and favorable to political liberalism, has been active in demonstrations and social media in favor of the "impeachment" of President Dilma Rousseff, and more recently with an extremely moralizing and conservative stance, for example, in demonstrations against art exhibitions that include images of naked bodies. In 2017, journalists exposed a network of U.S. American organizations responsible for financing this movement (Rossi, 2017; Phillips, 2018).

<sup>26</sup> For in depth reporting on the contexts and facts culminating in the 2016 coup, consult Democracy Now. Also, Laura Bates writes extensively about the double binds and sexism faced by women politicians around the world, and the impact this has on women's participation in political office (Bates, 2014). For an example of an image of Dilma Rousseff, see the cover page of the magazine *Istoé*, which can be accessed via the following link: <https://www.brasil247.com/pt/247/midiatech/224524/Dilma-ir%C3%A1-processar-Isto%C3%A9-por-%27crime-contra-honra%27.htm>

1970 and 1974, the period where Dilma Rousseff was imprisoned and suffered intense torture. Other women from Lula's and Rousseff's administrations stood and continue to stand in opposition to the 2016 coup. Many of these women were part of the resistance to the previous dictatorship, and they had also participated in the social and feminist movements of the 1980s and 1990s; the protagonists of these historic resistance movements became targets of scorn and vitriol during the 2016 conservative backlash.

The 2016 coup, with all its charged misogynist messages, has been fed slowly into a society where violence against women and machismo are pervasive.<sup>27</sup> In other words, in this environment conservative factions easily employ stereotypes and sexist discourses to discredit progressive politicians, especially women. On the one hand this misogyny informs and exacerbates a wave of conservative, retrograde backlash (Cowan, 2016). On the other hand, it fuels resistance movements against this retaliation, serves to strengthen women's movements, and contributes to the spread of a renewed feminism.<sup>28</sup>

### **Tuning-in to Feminist Genealogies in Brazil**

One thing is clear: crisis motivates. It intensifies and multiplies feminist frequencies. Extreme and obvious forms of misogyny shake moderates out of their slumber, forcing (re)action. If we think of feminist movements as radio waves, then what do new currents indicate about feminist genealogies? Indeed, in pre- and post-Coup Brazil, fresh frequencies emerge via movements that make feminist claims. These waves are considered part of the *Primavera Feminista*, or Brazilian feminist spring. They came into relief and surged under the PT, although now they are responding to conservative counterwaves led by politicians in cahoots with religious patriarchs. We consider four movements--the *Marchas das "Vadias"* (SlutWalks), *Marcha das Margaridas* (Daisies' March), *Marcha das Mulheres Negras Contra o Racismo, a Violência e pelo Bem-Estar* (Black Women's March Against Racism, Violence and for Well-Being), and high school student occupations--to trace the texture of these protests and see what they tell us about the shape of oppression and feminist resistance to it.

There is no ready-made or easy answer as to who these contemporary feminists are and how they are connected to previous movements. But some commonalities are apparent: emergent activists appeared under the governance of leftist leaders, they are motivated by crises, they understand the importance of reclaiming and representing diverse spaces, they collaborate across generations, and they grasp the structural nature of violence that individuals experience.<sup>29</sup> Each of

<sup>27</sup> According to Open Government Partnership, Brazil is among the top 5 countries in the world for the highest rate of femicide. In 2015, the rate was 4.8 per 100,000 women. See: <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/stories/open-data-about-femicide-brazil>

<sup>28</sup> Parallel to this phenomenon in Brazil, transnational feminist scholar Ashwini Tambe has credited an upsurge in feminist activism (evinced in the #metoo movement) in the U.S. as a response to the election of President Donald Trump who is on record admitting to have sexually assaulted women (Tambe, 2018). In Brazil, the campaign took the form of virtual protests on social networks using the hashtags #meuamigosecreto (mysecretfriend) and #meuprimeiroassedio (myfirstharrassment).

<sup>29</sup> In asserting that the personal is political, feminist activists around the world have long been at the forefront of anti-violence movements. Feminist anti-violence movements expose the ways in which personalized and systemic forms of aggression are inextricably linked. Interpersonal violence refers to brutalities like rape, domestic violence, and emotional and psychological abuse that occur within privatized relationships. Structural violence refers to injury caused by governments, institutions, business, or individuals who commit harm based on stereotypes. Feminist activists have drawn attention to the systemic violence-- rooted in historical processes and in social meanings ascribed to gender, race, class, sexuality, religion and nationality--which undergird the individualized aggressions

these movements has international and transnational connections. The breadth and depth of participation is remarkable. As the ‘Think Olga’ blog described the Feminist Spring of 2015, “Feminism took to the streets, forcing its way into conversations, and particularly into the lives of many women who had never imagined they would recognize themselves as [feminists or activists]” (Bello, 2015).<sup>30</sup> While women have a long history of activism in Brazil, this recent wave, dubbed the *Primavera Feminista* features astounding numbers of people joining feminist movements (labeled as such) for the first time.

The *Marchas das Vadias* (SlutWalks) started in 2011, in Brazil and all over the world, and have continued since.<sup>31</sup> The first official SlutWalk, organized in Toronto, Canada, responded to comments from University of York police officer Michael Sanguinetti, who remarked that women should avoid dressing like sluts if they do not want to be raped. In Brazil, the first SlutWalk came after an episode that was much-discussed in mainstream and social medias: a female student was expelled from a college for “dressing inappropriately” (“Estudante com roupa curta,” 2009). Young women, often accompanied by older women, use the marches as a platform to denounce femicide and combat physical and sexual violence, including, for example, violence on public transportation.<sup>32</sup> These marches brought many young cis-women, trans-women and sex workers to the streets, and as Morgani Guzzo shows in her research, they acquired very particular local significance (Guzzo, 2016). “Sluts” walked in cities all over Brazil, both capitals and small, country towns and were/are very controversial. The march has its own aesthetic, which includes showing bare breasts and using the body as a canvas. Its organization is connected to social networks and seeks to be “horizontal,” disconnected from any formal leadership.

Rural women workers from all over Brazil mobilized in 2000, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 for the *Marcha das Margaridas* (Daisies’ March). During the most recent iteration (2015), over 100,000 women workers convened in Brasília to put forward their demands to President Dilma Rousseff, who received them (Lebon and Betances, 2016; Aguiar, 2017, pp. 261, 295).<sup>33</sup> By receiving the organizers, President Rousseff gave this march legitimacy, and indicated that under the PT, the participation of social movements is processed as a sign of a healthy democracy, which differs vastly from post-coup motivations of social activists and the ways they are being received by the state. The 2015 iteration drew on a genealogy of Peasant Women Marches that grew out of church communities in the 1980s and were motivated by the struggle for recognition of their rights as workers. In the 1990s, these movements began a gradual yet confrontational approximation with feminism (Thayer, 2010; Schwendler, 2014). Many of these women now identify as feminists and are connected internationally through the World March of Women. Various rural workers’ organizations take part in the WMW’s organization, such as Contag (*Confederação Nacional de Trabalhadores Rurais*, or the National Confederation of Rural Workers), MST (*Movimento Sem*

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that many marginalized populations confront. To identify physical violence, coercive sex and abuse as gendered recognizes these as acts of power, which both define and reinforce sexism and toxic gender norms (Snyder, 2018; Saraswati, Et al., 2018).

<sup>30</sup> Olga is a feminist NGO created in 2013. The online platform—<https://thinkolga.com>—gives women access to information by and for them.

<sup>31</sup> Most recently, in 2016, a gang rape of a young woman in Rio de Janeiro, which the rapists recorded and posted on Facebook, provoked responses on the internet and in the streets, and spurred new waves of “SlutWalks” and demonstrations.

<sup>32</sup> Since 2006 there has been a specific carriage for women in the Rio metro and in 2017 a law was passed making these carriages mandatory. Women-only cars also exist on public transport in Mexico, Egypt, Japan, Indonesia, Taiwan, India, Germany and the United Kingdom.

<sup>33</sup> Brazil’s capital city.

*Terra*, or Landless People's Movement) and MMC (*Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas*, or Women Farmers' Movement). Peasant women's movements have forced "mainstream" feminists, who congregate in urban areas, to understand the importance of geography in relation to women's lived experiences. Along with indigenous women, rural movements foreground land and water rights as they resist ever-encroaching environmental degradation in the name of Agrobusiness.

Black women organizers realized the *Marcha das Mulheres Negras Contra o Racismo, a Violência e pelo Bem-Estar* (Black Women's March Against Racism, Violence and for Well-Being), held in Brasília on November 18, 2015. Called for by the *Articulação de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras* (Black Brazilian Women's Coordination), the march united over 50,000 black women.<sup>34</sup> According to Luiza Barrios, former minister for the Promotion of Racial Equality, "You can no longer think of the country while disregarding the black population, which is in the majority. Disregarding the black woman. If you do so, you are doing nothing and thinking nothing. And this is what the March is saying" (*Articulação de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras*, 2015, p. 15). Afro-Brazilian feminists have moved Brazilian feminism forward by introducing intersectional approaches; in other words they call attention to the way structural forces oppress women differently based not only on gender but also on race, class, ability, nation, and religion.

In addition, thousands of high school students occupied schools in São Paulo, Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul in 2015 and nationwide in 2016, including university campuses. Young women played a prominent role in the occupations, and they made sure gender was at the forefront of debates. While student protests were directly motivated by the state's attempts at passing various repressive legislation, the occupations were mostly led by young women and centered debates on gender. In 2015, student occupations responded to a movement promoted by the PSDB (the Party for Brazilian Social Democracy, a party that advocated to diminish State-funded services) to shut down government schools. In 2016, students protested a project to reform high school curriculum that came on the heels of the Coup.<sup>35</sup> Tuning into the student frequency we see actions and reactions as well as the dynamic notes that comprise each wave. Women's groups began to appear in schools, unions, universities and neighborhoods. Anti-princess workshops, children's books with female characters, documentaries, theater groups of the oppressed *Madalenas*, blogs, alternative press, feminist hip-hop groups (*Batalha das Mina* – Girls' Rap Battle), dance groups, feminist *batucada* (group percussion), Afro-hair workshops, and craft-work have all played their part. In 2017, March 8th was marked by strike action and many demonstrations, called the 8M, uniting women from all over the world.

These four feminist movements-- the slut walks, daisy march, Black women's march, student-led protests—illustrate the range of issues to emerge during Brazil's *Primavera Feminista*. Feminists received widespread media coverage, flooded social media (primarily Facebook and WhatsApp), and used these to bolster support for their causes. If the movements' platforms diverge based on the lived experiences of the women who comprise them, there are many points of connection undergirded by a history of European colonization and subsequent power struggles against interconnected patriarchal, white supremacist, capitalist systems of domination. Each of these movements place their struggles within global and systemic oppressions, but are attendant

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<sup>34</sup> According to the AMNB website-- <http://www.amnb.org.br/>-- the organization promotes collective action to combat racism, sexism, classism lesbophobia, and all forms of discrimination in order to restructure distributions of power in Brazil. It comprises 29- member NGOs from all over Brazil.

<sup>35</sup> For more information on the student movements, see the documentary film "*Lute como uma menina*," or "Fight like a girl" (Colombini and Alonso, 2016). Among other things, the film details the inspiration Brazilian students drew from Chile's example. One of the student slogans in the Brazilian protest was: "Peace is over, we are going to be another Chile!"

to local and individual manifestations. Brazilian materializations of the *Primavera* coincided with the governance of the PT and President Dilma Rousseff; but they are responding to a conservative wave that is seizing control around the world and which, in Brazil, has as its mouthpiece the deputies and politicians connected to the evangelical churches, charismatic movements from the Catholic Church, and institutions such as the Freemasons. In this context of (inter)national struggle, the Brazilian coup d'état, and the surge in University women's organizing in response to these, Brazilian feminists realized the WWC/FG, a major event (July 30- August 3, 2017) that drew on the union between the academy and various social movements. The event articulated a contemporary feminist boom that is a dynamic mix of women—old, young, black, indigenous, white, Asian, rural, urban, trans, LGBT, disabled—that aggregates theory and praxis. We turn now to this event as a case study of post-coup feminisms, which suggests two shifts: deepened solidarities among movements, and emergent connections between activists and academics.

### **Bridging Activisms and Academic Feminisms in the Women's Worlds March for Rights**

The damaging effects of the 2016 coup, followed by Lula's imprisonment and the election of Bolsonaro, cannot be understated. Among them, those in power are making every effort to maintain and increase inequalities, to put women back in their supposed "place" (domestic spaces), and to revoke affirmative actions such as university quotas, aimed at creating opportunities for social mobility for poor and black Brazilians. At the same time, the political and social crisis fomented the power of feminist movements and, consequently, impelled the production of knowledge originating in feminist thought. This "crisis feminism" emerges from Brazil as well as from other Latin American countries that are witnessing a revival of the Washington consensus, which has been lying dormant since the region transitioned from military regimes and dictators to democracy.

The current crisis, in Brazil and in a large part of the Americas, has led to a renewal and to new waves of feminist movements, made evident in the conference and march that united more than ten thousand people from July 30- August 4, 2017 in the city of Florianópolis, in the south of Brazil. Here, frequencies swelled and traversed, manifesting in a dynamic, multivocal/multi-issue demonstration that united under the banner of feminist solidarity and resistance to all forms of oppression. As part of the event, but beyond its academic boundaries, the Women's Worlds March for Rights took to the streets of the city. In this section, we draw from our own experiences as organizers and participants of the march to highlight elements of the event that speak to the specificities of contemporary Brazilian feminisms.

#### **The Women's Worlds March for Rights (*Marcha Internacional Mundos de Mulheres por Direitos*, or MMMD)**

On August 2, 2017, we are going to occupy the center of Florianópolis! We will be more than 7 thousand people United to march in defense of women's rights and feminist agendas. We will be black women, women from *quilombos*, indigenous women, white women, rural peasant women, women from the city, cis, trans, lesbians, bisexuals, gays, non-binary people, women with disability, and men from all over the world.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Quilombos are communities of Afro-descended Brazilians. These communities were originally formed by enslaved people who escaped and created their own settlements.

**What do we want?**

- That our voices be heard and that our bodies, in all their diversity, be recognized and respected.
- To demonstrate that we are organized and located all over the planet; we are unified in advocating for the construction of a society without oppression based on race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, ability, age, nationality or religion.
- To declare the integration of our plural practices, whether in the university, in the fight of social movements or in our intimate lives. For the end of “rape culture”, feminicide, sexism, misogyny, racism, ableism and trans/lesbo/homo/bi phobia.
- To have the right to make decisions about our own bodies, to end mandatory motherhood and to have access to free, unrestricted, safe and accessible abortion as public policy.
- Recognition of our roles as mothers and the equal division of responsibility for care over our children and our homes.
- *To show that the production of knowledge about gender, women, sexuality and feminism reflects the necessity of a more just society for all, independent of sexual orientation, skin color, social class or gender identity. Studying gender is a way to combat prejudice and violence.*<sup>37</sup>
- To show that we stand together against the rollback of our rights and that we will resist, together with other groups, the conservative wave sweeping the globe.

Our March is the construction of a space of struggle, a space to make plural and feminist claims, a space of freedom!

*(Excerpt from the manifesto of the MMMD)*

The emphasis in the text above is ours. The highlighted passage demonstrates the union of political perspectives between academic feminists and activists who have been engaged side by side in the construction of the March. Academics and activists understand that it is important for women to gain visibility as political subjects. The political guidelines that form the basis of a wide range of feminist movements are equally important. These guidelines may vary in detail, but they are undergirded by the pursuit of gender, race, and social class equity.

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<sup>37</sup> Emphasis by authors of this article.

The collective statement that "Studying gender is a way to combat prejudice and violence," recognizes academic feminists as part of social movements. It is an assertion that the production of knowledge should work in the service of social justice. If for a long time there were great social and class differences between academics and activists, the Women's Worlds Congress/11th *Fazendo Gênero* (WWC/FG), held at the Federal University of Santa Catarina, in southern Brazil, showed that unity and solidarity are filling old gaps. One major motivation for newfound solidarities is crisis, induced by conservative forces who seek to unravel the many progressive accomplishments of the past decades.

Such solidarities were made possible by policies instituted by the PT, and, in this case, particularly the university quotas. With the implementation of racial quota systems in Brazil that encouraged the entrance of black women and men into university spaces, the production of academic knowledge began to diversify in terms of themes and research questions.<sup>38</sup> From inside the academy, the always-necessary militancy had continuity, while also drawing from new configurations and strategies. Many of these black students were in the organizing committees of the MMMD, bringing with them their history of militancy and their working groups.

Beyond racial diversity, inclusion policies reached unexpected audiences that manifested in the WWC/FG; trans women and men are two such populations. Trans people have been able to attend universities more freely, with the recognition of their chosen names (social names, or *nomes sociais* in Portuguese). As members and leaders of the trans identities committee, they also played key roles in the organization of the WWC in Brazil and the MMMD. Trans folks marked their presence throughout the event, in roundtables, presentations, and artistic performances. One of the main musical events of the WWC / FG was trans-identified artist MC Linn da Quebrada. Her show was packed, and with audience members that may not have otherwise attended an academic event. Over a year later, the UFSC community continues to recount the performance and contemplate the issues MC Linn raised; issues like creating space for trans people and imagining trans liberation.

In addition to MC Linn's performance and the trans identities committee, organizers created and posted a guide for hosting trans people, explaining how to proceed in accessing the conference space and how to navigate bureaucratic issues, such as obtaining certificates. The committee printed an explanatory brochure, which they distributed around service areas within the university, such as snack bars, also for employees who were working during the event. The brochure, written by trans people and allies on the committee, included information about how they would like to be addressed, the use of restrooms, and best practices for respectful coexistence with the large trans population came to campus for the week-long event. Unfortunately, some of these measures were temporary fixes implemented that week only, such as gender fluid restrooms. But many other lessons, such as the instructions given to UFSC campus security and cleaning staff, live on through the pedagogical nature of the preparations leading up to the event. In the auditorium that hosted the trans identities roundtable, every chair and inch of the floor was full for the lively open forum that featured debate, exchanges of experiences, and the articulation of the trans movement, which is embraced by the umbrella of contemporary feminisms.

Organizers opened space for other types of activism through persistent outreach efforts--by e-mails, telephone contacts and social networks--to diverse women's movements. Women came from every corner of Brazil: women of different indigenous nations, women farmers, domestic servants, prostitutes, *quilombolas*, women artists. Activists and academics came from all over the

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<sup>38</sup> As discussed previously, racial quotas were implemented mostly in the late 2000s, under the governments of Lula da Silva and Rousseff.

world. They all had the opportunity and the invitation to collectively build this historical event that was Women's Worlds and *Fazendo Genero*.

Women,

The creation of our meeting is being done in a collective way, drawing on the expertise of academics and militants / activists, who have been forming an ever closer relationship, at this important moment in the national and international conjuncture that calls for the unity of all segments of women and feminists.

*Excerpt from the invitation to the public launch of the programming for MMMD / FG on March 7 and 8, 2017*

This does not mean that each stage took place without difficulties and conflicts, which stem from the mistrust of the members of social movements in relation to academic feminists and their intentions, since they are considered socially privileged and therefore incapable of adhering to or understanding the deeper dimensions of the movements. Fortunately, we have had the opportunity to demonstrate that other paths and convergences are possible and necessary.

We know from the history of the WWC that this is a meeting that starts from the academy and that has rarely made efforts to include social movements.<sup>39</sup> Thus, it is important to note that not all opportunities are used or appropriated in the same way. Here is where the specifics of Brazilian and Latin American feminist organizing emerge.

Before we began managing the logistics of this huge event, faculty, staff and students at the Institute for Gender Studies at the UFSC created a vision for a Brazilian iteration of WWC/FG. During the first general coordination meetings, which included one of the authors of this text (Cristina), organizers shared their hopes for the event. Gradually, we converted an initial vision into an outline of our goals for this international meeting of feminists. Building on our general objectives for the WWC, organizers decided to take advantage of the international platform it would provide for Brazilian organizers. As soon as we determined the event held great potential to showcase and expand the agendas of social movements both local and global, organizers set out to make the WWC / FG a meeting place for activists and academics, laying the groundwork for future meetings, strategies for resistance, and plans of action in the international fight for women's rights. The idea of a "march," a mobilization bringing together pluralistic and diverse feminisms was already beginning to be drawn.

Once we established the intention to bring together academic feminists and activists from social movements, organizers strategized over logistics. Namely, in order to realize this meeting, we spent time and (re)allocated the resources necessary to bring our goals to fruition. We invited representatives from diverse social movements to participate in planning and, little by little, some joined the group. A commission of social movements was set up, then subdivided into committees of discussion forums, round tables, tents, workshops and marches.

Conference organizers covered costs for some tickets, hotels and daily allowances for the poorest participants, mostly black and indigenous women, who came from other places in Brazil. We sought to provide solidarity housing, financial support for about two hundred people, via grants, cheap food in the university restaurant, printing photos and papers, transportation from the

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<sup>39</sup> An exception to this rule was the WWC Canadian edition (2011), which that called for the debate the indigenous American women and disabled

airport to the hotel, transportation from the hotel to the event, and everything else that was possible. Instead of funding tickets and lodging for thematic symposium coordinators, our main investment was in those women who could not be there if they did not receive some kind of support. We made it a top priority for the most marginalized women to be there, and then allocated resources accordingly.<sup>40</sup>

This method of prioritizing funding paid off. In the event's programming, women from social movements were present at all 33 roundtables, along with academics, including three tables made up only of activists. Representatives from the movements comprised a majority of the debate forums, assembled in 15 thematic axes determined by the conference organizers.<sup>41</sup> Activists sat on the table that opened the event and they also carried out several artistic presentations. The "Feminist and Solidarity Tent" made it possible to commercialize products exclusively made by low-income women. Social movements coordinated the *Tenda Mundos de Mulheres* (Women's Worlds Tent), which featured speakers, lectures and artistic presentations throughout the event, enabling numerous exchanges of knowledge and dialogues.

The urgency of Brazil's political moment, and of similarly dire circumstances across the globe, motivated our thirst for encounter with one another. Still reeling from the 2016 coup, Brazilians in particular were inspired to action in defense of democracy and of the legacy of the first woman president in Brazilian history. As of May 2016, Brazilians have been living a constant attack on women's rights and their most precious assets, such as land, for indigenous women, and their bodies, as in the case of women who have historically suffered from the combined effects of machismo, misogyny, and racialization.

The MMMD showcased these grievances. In addition to demanding rights over their lands and bodies, marchers decried "*Fora Temer*" (or "Out Temer"), calling for the ousting of Michel Temer, the illegitimate president of Brazil after the coup d'État removed President Rousseff. For the main local TV channel affiliated with Rede Globo, the women's march was nothing more than a demonstration against Temer. This seemingly neutral claim sought to undermine the March's political content; despite mainstream media efforts, they could not erase the feminist action, which featured 10,000 people marching, overwhelmingly women. Even Marielle Franco, the Rio de Janeiro council representative, who was murdered in May 2018, was present at this march.

In the MMMD, international feminist agendas found themselves faced with local agendas, where gender-based issues are not necessarily the most pressing. In Brazil, these issues include demarcation of indigenous lands, recognition of *quilombola* communities, settlements of landless workers, and recognition of full citizenship for black women and men, and trans people, many of whom are marked by other categories of difference, such as race, poverty, generation, location. That is, the March was much more than a *Fora Temer* movement! In this setting, feminist waves surged and crossed. A long trajectory of women's movements and their demands met the feminisms of today--plural and multifaceted yet powerful and consolidated. An acute moment of

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<sup>40</sup> Here is information about the selection process for distributing financial aid: first, there was a call for scholarship applications on the conference site that folks could apply to. We drew our selection criteria from the Commission for Social Movements (CAMS), prioritizing the participation of black, indigenous, agricultural, low income and trans women as well as women who didn't have the conditions to come to the event. According to these priorities, conference organizers allotted a scholarship of 500R. We provided housing through partnerships with a hotel and through "solidarity housing" offered by residents of the island.

<sup>41</sup> The thematic axes were: Arts, Education, Environment/Rural World, Health, Human Rights, Media, Politics, Race and Ethnicity, Religion, Reproductive Rights, Sexualities/Trans-identities, Social Movements, Violence, Work and Academic space of debates.

crisis, and an awareness of the necessity of unity, impels the current shape of feminist struggle in Brazil and worldwide.

Even the voices that are found in this article can be considered in their hybrid characteristics; the authors of this piece are committed to both scholarship and activism, and we also see our scholarship as activist. Feminist theory and practice in Brazil go together. The WWC/FG, as a political arena, brought together aspects that characterize contemporary feminisms, such as art, politics and militancy, blurring the boundaries that once separated the university from its exterior. From a historical perspective, it is a unique event. From the political point of view, it is the beginning of a renewed struggle, which for the moment has no prospect of ending.

### **Movements and Counter-movements: The Misogynist Coup Deepens**

The emergence of feminism as a mass movement, with marches and participation of social networks, has been met with a misogynist, anti-feminist, anti-LGBT, anti-gender countermovement. In Brazil, the Pentecostal Evangelical churches are the primary promoters of this countermovement. Evangelical organizations have garnered major economic, political and media influence in recent decades. Their members comprise 30% of the deputies and senators in Brazil's National Congress, they are CEOs of televisions and radio conglomerates, and they control a wide-ranging network of pastors and churches which traverse location and social class.<sup>42</sup> The Catholic Church, and particularly charismatic renewal movements and groups such as Opus Dei, also participates in anti-feminist countermovements. The Freemasons, Rotary Club, and other non-governmental institutions have helped feed a conservative backlash. Two key issues that this countermovement pushed were the "*Ideologia de Gênero*" (Gender Ideology) and *Movimento Escola Sem Partido* (Schools Without Political Parties), which advocate the removal of content on gender, feminism and sexuality from school, alleging that they are indoctrinating children to become homosexuals and destroying families. Besides this, they do not believe that teachers should express any political content in their classrooms. In other words, teachers of history, geography and philosophy are heavily criticized and have been subjected to lawsuits, complaints and a series of other disturbing actions. *Escola Sem Partido* (Schools without Political Parties) Bills in the House of Representatives, Senate, State Assemblies and Municipal Councils, establish limits to teachers' liberty.

In 2018, the coup seems to continue, manifesting in the election of Jair Bolsonaro. The sensation is of a hole that is opening up and swallowing everything we had built, swallowing the houses of *Minha Casa Minha Vida* (My Home, My Life), the universities, the main state companies, labor rights, public policies aimed at equality of gender and race. The sense of insecurity deepens further with attacks on supporters of former President Lula (who has clearly become a political prisoner, arrested without evidence in order to prevent him from running for election in 2018) and the execution of city councilor Marielle Franco of the PSOL Rio de Janeiro. Franco was a black lesbian woman, a mother who fought in defense of the black populations of the favelas of Rio de Janeiro against police violence and military intervention.

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<sup>42</sup> Evangelical factions have drawn on this powerful base to propose several bills before the National Congress. Here are three examples of misogynist bills, which have a strong chance of approval: one of them widens the classification of abortion as crime and rolls back the rights gained in relation to care for survivors of sexual violence; another is based on the idea of a "right to life from the moment of conception" and makes abortion a heinous crime; and yet another set the "inviolability of the right to life from the moment of conception."

At the head of the resistance are the faces of women, who take the floor at a time of political crisis. Franco was assassinated shortly after an 8M protest; her murder—still under investigation—set off a series of protests in Brazilian cities large and small. Many of the protests were as well attended as the March 8, with strong presence of the black women, who had voice and place.

### **Conclusions: Where there is Resistance there is Power**

In “The Romance of Resistance,” feminist anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod reverses Foucault’s famous assertion that “where there is power, there is resistance,” and proposes instead that “where there is resistance, there is power” (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 42). Rather than romanticizing struggles against oppression, she advocates that we read resistance as a diagnostic of power, to understand its transformation. According to this logic, we have outlined the formation of systems of domination and subordination in Brazil, beginning with Portuguese colonization of the territory, through consolidation of control by wealthy elites, decades of military rule, and neoliberal policy. This history of oppression splinters with the election of the PT and redistributions appear possible until conservative elite restore their rule through a coup d’état in 2016. This coup, together with the jailing of former President Lula da Silva, made possible the 2018 election of Jair Bolsonaro. The leaders of the coup, which turned into a campaign against the PT, drew on the vast economic and ideological resources at their disposal--the media, the church, international business ties, misogyny, anti-blackness, anti-communism--to overturn the progressive government’s redistributive agenda. During the coup and in its aftermath, and at every step of this history of power, women have been at the forefront of the resistance. So what does this genealogy of feminist struggle suggest about the transformation of power?

Long before explicitly feminist movements emerged, women fought for liberation alongside their comrades. But experiences of discrimination within these movements informed the creation of independent women’s movements, aimed at dismantling sexist oppression. These radical movements institutionalized, and for a brief moment it appeared possible to restructure areas of society via the state. Indeed many of the structures implemented under the PT, such as education quotas and basic minimum incomes, have been foundational for creating change. These policies set the stage for the vibrant waves that emerged from the Feminist Spring, only to be met with a conservative backlash, which attempts to roll back hard-fought redistributive policy. If we must find a silver lining amongst the wreckage, it is that the ensuing crises have forged unions among social movements.

The MMMD demonstrates the converging of waves via newly formed solidarities between Afro-Brazilian women and women of the African diaspora, indigenous women from Brazil and the Americas, peasant women, working women (of all forms of labor including sex work and domestic work), and queer and trans folks. In addition to gender and sexuality, these movements have put issues relating to race, class and rights over land and water at the forefront of progressive agendas. Our case study, the MMMD / FG, also demonstrates commitments to bridging academic and activist agendas. This dynamic shape of feminist movements speaks to the onslaught of multifaceted, conservative counterattacks. The coup and subsequent power grabs by Brazil’s elite aim to shore up control over the church, the media and especially over educational systems, to disseminate repressive ideologies in response to perceived progressive threats. Synergies between academic and activist feminists emerge as conservative policy makers increasingly target primary and tertiary education. Knowledge production, in other words, has been identified as a key battleground in Brazil. Weathering the storm will require rainbow coalitions of women’s rights

advocates who strengthen feminist frequencies by merging theory and praxis and by placing the needs of the most marginalized at the center of their demands.

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