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## ‘Right now I want to scream!’ Using participatory film with communities in Haiti and Brazil in order to expose state violence and make connections across countries

### *Abstract*

We have produced two documentary films on the use of militarized violence in policing operations against marginalized communities in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. We use participatory practices as a methodology to collaborate with survivors of state violence as they tell their stories of violent raids, inadequate medical support, criminalization by the media, and exclusion by authorities in addressing the injustices inflicted by states. The connections between state violence in both countries, and working collaboratively over time with these communities, allows an investigation that offers sustainability in perspective and representation.

*Keywords:* Human rights, violence, Haiti, Brazil

QR-Code for the film It stays with you:  
Use of force by UN Peacekeepers in Haiti:



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QR-Code for the film Right now I want to scream:  
Police and army killings in Rio – the Brazil Haiti connection:



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## *Introduction*

We have produced two documentary films on the use of militarized violence in policing operations against marginalized communities in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. We use participatory practices as a methodology to collaborate with survivors of state violence as they tell their stories of violent raids, inadequate medical support, criminalization by the media, and exclusion by authorities in addressing the injustices inflicted by states. The connections between state violence in both countries, and working collaboratively over time with these communities, allows an investigation that offers sustainability in perspective and representation.

'It Stays With You: Use of Force by UN Peacekeepers in Haiti' (2018) narrates the experiences of those who live in the Bois Neuf neighbourhood of Cité Soleil, Port-au-Prince, and who experienced raids by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The survivors explain the overwhelming violence perpetrated against their small community by Brazil-led military troops in 'policing operations' against local gangs. Each military operation left scores of civilians dead, many injured and much housing flattened.

Our film 'Right Now I Want to Scream: Police and Army Killings in Rio – the Brazil Haiti' *Connection* (2020) was produced also using collaborative practices, where participants retain co-ownership of their contributions. This film tells the stories of survivors of police raids in Rio; in the state of Rio de Janeiro, the police kill an average of five people per day in highly militarized operations.

The projects have provided challenges to the concept of participatory practice, given the differences in distance, language and resources between the filmmakers and participants in both films. Dana-Ain Davis argues that participatory practice 'embodies fairness, respect, and encourages the broadest possible distribution of power... The challenge is in transferring the ideal of equity into a lived experience of shared power' (Davis 2006: 233). Our challenge was to acknowledge such discrepancies in resources and make the process as transparent as possible. Both films, and accompanying context, including panel discussions, can be found at this website – <https://itstayswithyou.com/>.

## *It Stays With You*

### *Filmmakers' background*

Wills' expertise is in international human rights law, while McLaughlin's is in participatory documentary filmmaking. Their initial interest in Haiti emerged from a Wills' research visit to Port-au-Prince and the realisation that military means were employed in policing operations by the United Nations peace-keeping mission between 2004–2017. When they discussed further research, it was decided that audiovisual testimonies of affected communities' experiences would add to the value of the work. Recorded experiences can be more accessible, visceral and sustainable in their usefulness to both communities and authorities. An important aspect for communities to consider in engaging with researchers is the possibility of having their voices heard on an international platform. That is our responsibility and challenge.

Because Wills had visited Haiti before filming, she had some sense of the extreme poverty and political chaos that engulfed the country ever since the overthrow of the first democratically elected President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, in 2004. McLaughlin had previously filmed in the townships of Cape Town, South Africa, but even he was taken aback by the impoverishment experienced under the USA dominated government.<sup>1</sup>



Illustration 1: Joseph Pierre-Louis, *It Stays With You* (2018)

1 For these films, see <https://cahalmclaughlin.com/>

### *Haiti Background*

Haiti was the site of a successful slave revolt that led in 1804 to the establishment of the world's first Black republic. Napoleon then threatened to invade the country. To prevent this, the Haiti rulers were forced to agree to pay reparations to France for loss of 'property,' i.e. slaves; the total demanded was 100 million francs (about \$21 billion in today's value). Reparations were paid every year until the 'debt' was paid off in 1947 – leaving a once rich agricultural society reduced to poverty (Daut, 2020).<sup>2</sup> More recently, Haiti's first democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was overthrown twice in coup d'états supported by the USA (Sprague 2012). Following the second coup in 2004, the USA sent troops to Haiti, but these were subsequently replaced by the UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), a peacekeeping mission mandated by the UN Security Council, which operated between 2004 and 2017. At the time of filming, many Haitians regarded the UN presence as an 'occupying force.'



Illustration 2: Veronique Petion, *It Stays With You* (2018)

### *Minustah*

MINUSTAH was led by Brazilian generals<sup>3</sup> and consisted primarily of a military structure and personnel, and military hardware and

<sup>2</sup> Also, see the report on ABCNews by Choi, Hyeyoon on 24 July 2021, 'How colonial-era debt helped shape Haiti's poverty and political unrest' <https://abcnews.go.com/US/colonial-era-debt-helped-shape-haitis-poverty-political/story?id=78851735>.

<sup>3</sup> Nepalese troops were later to introduce cholera to Haiti resulting in a

transport. This was the only example of the UN using peacekeeping troops mandated under Chapter VII of the UN Charter in a country where there was ‘civil unrest’ rather than ‘armed conflict’. The UN’s main aim was to control the violence and proliferation of armed gangs, some of which had connections with political parties and state security (Sprague 2012).

Between 2005 and 2007 there were 15 heavily armed raids by MINUSTAH on Cité Soleil neighbourhood. In Operation Iron Fist, which was launched to arrest a local community/gang leader in Bois Neuf, MINUSTAH used 22,700 firearm cartridges, 78 grenades, and 5 mortar shells. Even the US Ambassador to Haiti, James Foley, said that because of ‘the flimsy construction of homes in Cité Soleil and the large quantity of ammunition expended, it is likely that rounds penetrated many buildings, striking unintended targets’; while Douglas Griffiths, then deputy US ambassador to Haiti, reported that allegations that MINUSTAH had killed twenty women and children were ‘credible’ (Wills 2018: 666).

### *Differences and Expectations*

Our interpreter and guide Myrlene (Mimi) Dominique was well known in Bois Neuf. She organised a meeting with a group of residents, discussed what we proposed and what they wanted to achieve. We had the equipment from our universities, finance from a research grant, the expertise in our law and film backgrounds, and the resources, which included research time, to make this project feasible. By contrast, the participants had no running water and struggled to feed their families. However, while participants depended on our resources and expertise, we depended on their experiences and knowledge, as well as the interpreter’s negotiation during the production period.

One resident wanted to know if we could bring ‘justice’ for them, but we explained that we did not have the necessary legal expertise nor connections, but that we could provide a public platform for their stories. We discussed the different possibilities of style and structure of the film and it was agreed to prioritise the voices of the participants, with some non-resident, expert opinion used to support their stories.

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devastating death toll of at least 7,000, see <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2013/10/09/230704205/activists-sue-u-n-over-cholera-that-killed-thousands-in-haiti>.

### *Participants*

Where possible, we filmed each resident in their home, which usually consisted of one room with corrugated walls; this allowed a sense of their living conditions. Victor Jean told us about losing his daughter in a MINUSTAH raid. The shooting had come closer to their home and they decided to escape. In the chaos, he got out of the house, but his daughter did not follow. When he returned, he found her shot dead. As Victor is telling us this story, he begins to cry at the loss of his daughter and the smaller of the two children behind him stops their play to look over. It seems that they had never heard their grandfather cry before.

Edren Elisma also lost his daughter during the raid. He first describes how UN ‘tanks’<sup>4</sup> arrived ‘on a raised bit of ground, so they could shoot better. Every time it would hit the corrugated metal it’s as though it was happening inside your heart.’ Edren and his daughter, Vanne, were both hit by MINUSTAH bullets. Edren was less seriously injured than Vanne, so he was able to take her to a doctor, but the doctor said they did not have enough money to treat her. Months later, she complained of pains, and died shortly afterwards. Edren expresses regret that he could not afford to save her; Eveline, her mother, adds that they could not afford a burial, so they laid her to rest in the nearby sea.

Modeline Dorcius tells us that her father was shot by the UN while he was working in his pottery workshop. Her younger sister, Diorlie, describes arriving at the workshop and seeing body parts lying across the floor and even on the ceiling. Modeline tells us that as a result of losing her father she could no longer afford to go to school. She said, because she wasn’t able to have an education, she became a young mother; she starts to cry and one of her children comforts her.

Sorel Eliasse describes how his brother was blinded in one eye by a UN bullet. Sorel rushed outside when he heard the gunfire and took his brother to several hospitals, but none could find the bullet. The brother was in constant pain, so Sorel approached his brother’s employer, who took him to a hospital in neighbouring Dominican Republic. The bullet, which had gone through the front of his head and lodged at the back, was extracted and given to him in a jar. His brother found it difficult to adjust to life and was persuaded to move to the countryside, separated from his family.

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4 ‘Tanks’ is the term residents used to describe the heavily armoured vehicles from which guns, mortars and grenades were fired.

Joseph Pierre-Louis stands in front of his flattened home, with only the walls poking out from the ground. He points to where the house of a neighbour was destroyed and the parents and three children died. When the raid began, his house shook and he put his grandchild in a suitcase and he lay on top to protect her. When we returned a few days after filming, Joseph approached us and said that he felt he had ‘grown one foot taller since I told you my story. I don’t know if I have grown one foot taller, but I feel I have.’ One resident told us that we were the first people in ten years to come to the community to ask questions about what had happened.

Eveline Myrtil was inside her home when she was hit by bullets on her shoulder. One of her daughters was hit on her chin and another on her shoulder. She remembers the incident full of fear and screams. The home was so damaged that they had to relocate. ‘They took it out on everyone and everything’, she explains. ‘All this was done by the white folks’ bullets ... the sheets, the mattress, the TV, everything was completely destroyed.’

Jacklin Clerveau is filmed as he walks around the community, pointing out the devastation caused by the raid. This tour was one of the most shocking aspects of our visit. In some areas, entire houses had been demolished, as if in a bombing raid, yet this was a ‘policing’ operation supposedly against drug gangs.

### *Witnesses*

We conducted interviews with people who had indirect experience and knowledge of MINUSTAH raids. Charlot Armstrong is a medical doctor who was called to help with the injured, but found the community blocked off by MINUSTAH troops. After 24 hours, he was allowed access and what he witnessed was, ‘an atrocious thing. One of the things that struck me most was a three-year-old child in his mother’s arms with his guts hanging out as a result of this (military) operation’. Seth Donnelly, who was then on a visit with the US Labour and Human Rights Delegation to Haiti, remembers seeing the bodies of a mother and her two children lying in their house; the father described to him how a grenade had been thrown into the shack followed by gunfire. After a separate raid in 2006, John Carroll, a USA medical doctor who worked at St. Catherine’s Hospital in Cité Soleil, describes visiting the home of three teenage girls, who explained their injuries resulted from a helicopter firing through the roof of their

home in the early morning hours. John describes the bullet holes riddled across the roof.

### *Experts*

To help provide more contextual detail about the legality of MINUSTAH's use of lethal force in policy raids, we interviewed several human rights experts. Professor Camille Chalmers criticised MINUSTAH for treating a community as 'criminal,' and points out that MINUSTAH called a lethal raid in 2006 a 'successful operation' because MINUSTAH suffered no casualties. Philip Alston, who was a UN Special Rapporteur between 2004 and 2010, points out the requirement of MINUSTAH to conform to International Human Rights Law, which covers policing operations, and not International Humanitarian Law, which covers military conflicts. Beatrice Linstorm, from the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, outlines the Status of Forces Agreement signed by the Haitian government and the UN to provide compensation for loss of life, injuries or damage to property; very little has been offered to those affected. Eveline had pointed out that she gave up visiting a UN base on being repeatedly turned away; 'It makes you feel worthless,' she said.

### *Post-production*

During the recording period, Mimi had joined us to view each day's interviews to provide a summary of what had been said, which helped us with a sense of what had been accomplished and what was still required. The recorded interviews in Creole were later sent to a translator, who provided English translations for us to prepare a paper edit.

The paper edit was sent to the editor, Barbara Henkes; we provided a structure and allowed her visual storytelling freedom. We tried to ensure that participants had as much screen-time as possible, with the contextual visuals working as montage between, rather than over, their sections. We used text cards, rather than oral narration, to provide context, because we did not wish to compete with the participants' voices. The post-sound editor, Neil Horner, is also a composer and he created short music scores for the brief montages and text cards that the film required. The Smithsonian Folkways Recordings proved a useful source for the song 'Soleil' by Emerante De Pradines from her album *Creole Songs of Haiti*, an interpretation of Vodou ceremonial songs.



When we were editing the film in Ireland, direct contact was lost with most participants, due to the precarity of their lives. Mimi was our only contact point, because of the unavailability/affordability of the internet and unreliability of mobile phones in Bois Neuf, for example they were sometimes used as currency to provide the basics of sustenance. We were unable to send draft edits online to the participants and instead provided a draft edit near completion in person. The response was positive with a request to replace subtitling in Creole of the English language interviews with audio dubbing because some participants were not literate.

### *Screenings*

The première at the Soros Foundation-funded FOKAL Cultural Centre in Port-au-Prince to a full theatre was followed by a panel that included two participants: Evelyn Myrtle described the pain of secondary trauma, with the very institution charged with protecting you, MINUSTAH, being the one to, first, violate, and second, denigrate you. Many in the theatre took up the thread of challenging the official rationale for MINUSTAH's presence in Haiti and the damage it was doing. For most of the participants, this was the first time they had ever been inside the FOKAL theatre.

A screening of the film at the UN Human Rights Council side-event in Geneva in 2018 proved an important milestone. On this trip, we met with the HRC officer responsible for Haiti and received an empathetic hearing. She informed us that the film had already been seen throughout the UN and there were legitimate concerns to address. Shortly after this, and some lobbying by us, a MINUSTAH human rights officer in Haiti agreed to meet with the participants, albeit at our expense and only at the UN's Port-au-Prince office, rather than visit the damaged neighbourhood. Our hopes were raised, but then dashed when this officer informed us that the investigation had been closed down and we now had to deal directly with UN HQ in New York. This was the first step in the UN shutting its doors to further communication about MINUSTAH's raids, whether a full investigation, reparations for deaths and loss of homes, or even an apology. The contrast in resources between the participants and the filmmakers was being replicated between the filmmakers and the UN.

The next task was to plan as much exhibition of the film as possible. Utilising online festival platforms, we managed a series of success-

es, including 'Best Film' awards, but have been disappointed at the low take-up by human rights film festivals, with the exception of the Respect Human Rights Film Festival in Belfast and Amnesty International Film Festival in Nice. We were facing three challenges: Haiti is not a priority in terms of human rights, nor indeed most media attention, and, if it was, the issues of cholera and sexual violence perpetrated by the UN understandably take precedence (Hallward 2007); secondly, challenging the UN, with its reputation for peace-keeping and human rights work, runs counter to most people's understanding of its role; thirdly, the film does not conform to the mainstream film structure of following one or two people in a narrative of overcoming challenges. Participatory practices include collaborating with participants and their preferences for storytelling; in this film the testimonies dominate, with visual and audio recording providing context and support to their stories.

The film has been screened internationally, including in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Japan, London, Uruguay and the USA. One of the most important events was at the Caribbean Tales Film Festival in Toronto, where a diaspora audience responded positively and angrily to the situation in their home country; this was followed by a broadcast interview given to Television Ontario (TVO).<sup>5</sup> The Tenemos Que Ver Human Rights Film Festival in Montevideo was notable for one audience member explaining that there had been protests against the use of Uruguayan military in peacekeeping in Haiti, because of allegations of brutality. One useful suggestion occurred at Harvard University, when the chair asked for a moment of reflection after the screening before the panel discussion and the sharing of personal responses from the audience; this was a very helpful contribution to the post-screening process, given the film's very sensitive content that can be retraumatising for some.

### *Reviews*

One of the most insightful reviews occurred in the San Francisco State University journal, *Pluralities*, which reflects our approach:

Eschewing common documentary practices like voiceover narration or expository framing, the film centres its participatory-based

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<sup>5</sup> For more on the screenings, Q&As, etc., see <https://itstayswithyou.com/screenings/>.

practice on the residents of Cité Soleil. This is vital to the story being told – a story that has been overlooked by much of Western journalism and the world at large. (Hunter 2018)<sup>6</sup>

### *Follow Up*

With the disappointment of UN inaction, we returned to Bois Neuf with the opportunity for participants to make a short film each about an issue of their choosing. We purchased easy-to-use ‘zoom’ cameras, offering to lend them to the participants for a week, with a follow up session to edit their material. This offer was not taken up by the participants, due to the uncertain security situation and the risk of losing the cameras. It was unanimously decided to film to-camera testimonies on the spot in different rooms in the empty school where we met. Two young filmmakers, Jeanty Junior Augustin and Pierre Moise, assisted in producing these recordings. Each participant was free to choose which theme to address and we discussed possible options, including a digital memory of their lost loved one or an address to the UN. They unanimously decided to address the UN directly, which reflected their anger and grief at the violence inflicted on them and their families. We sent these to-camera appeals to the UN Secretary General and Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, but to date have had no response.<sup>7</sup>

### *Postscript*

We had been successful in gaining a further grant from the AHRC to produce a film on the Lasaline massacre of November 2018, when up to 70 residents of Lasaline were killed and many buildings destroyed in an attack by right-wing militias, with evidence that the police and government personnel collaborated.<sup>8</sup> By the time of the award, the already precarious security situation in Haiti had deteriorated further due to several factors, including protests over price rises and corruption by the government,<sup>9</sup> and we were forced to delay the project by one year. However, the following year, with the onset Covid

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.pluralities.org/01/02>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://itstayswithyou.com/updates/>.

<sup>8</sup> National Lawyers Guild, 2019, <https://www.nlg.org/report-the-lasalin-massacre-and-the-human-rights-crisis-in-haiti/>.

<sup>9</sup> BBC News, 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-us-canada-41251893>.

19, we were once again delayed. Then, the British government decided to radically cut its overseas aid programme. The AHRC were no longer able to extend the grant period – we were only one of many casualties of this decision.<sup>10</sup> Sadly, we were unable to revisit the participants from Bois Neuf.

## *'Right Now I Want to Scream'*

### *Introduction*

In 2019 General Heleno, MINUSTAH's first force commander, was appointed as Brazil's Minister for Institutional Security under President Bolsonaro's government. Bolsonaro was clearly impressed with his role in Haiti, arguing, 'the rule was: you find an element with a gun, you shoot, and then you see what happened. You solve the problem'. Both men regarded increasing the militarised policing of favelas as the primary method of tackling the problem of armed drug gangs. A crucial context of policing and favelas, the poorly resourced neighbourhoods in major Brazilian cities, is that they both have historical links to slavery. The policing structures, in particular the Military Police unit, were first created to police slaves and to recapture those who escaped their captivity.<sup>11</sup> Favelas were first created in Rio by slaves who had escaped their slavery and sought shelter in urban centres.<sup>12</sup>

### *Research Meeting*

Our associate producer and interpreter Juliana Resende set up meetings for us prior to our arrival in October, 2019. We first met with community workers in the centre of Redes de Maré, a network of favelas in the Complexo da Maré in the northern part of Rio. We

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10 Armstrong, Nicky, and Evelyn Pauls. 2021. 'Showing How UKRI Foreign Aid Cuts Threaten Impact on the Ground.' *Social Science Space*, April 16<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.socialsciencespace.com/2021/04/showing-how-ukri-foreign-aid-cuts-threaten-impact-on-the-ground/>.

11 Ashcroft, Patrick. 2014. 'History of Rio de Janeiro's Military Police Part 1: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Beginnings.' *RioOnWatch: Community Reporting on Rio*, 18 February, <https://riononwatch.org/?p=13506>.

12 'What is a Favela?', *RioOnWatchTV*, 18 July, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Evd6ryt3YgA>.

discussed the theme of the proposed film and the methodology of participatory practices, while they explained their role and situation, including research on the issue of police killings in the neighbourhood. We also visited their library where children were reading, and later their Art Centre, where dance and performance classes take place. Everyone expressed an interest in the project and considered the participatory approach essential to working with local residents.

Transport to favelas can be difficult to undertake, with some taxis refusing to enter at all. There is no public transport to most favelas, and none to the Maré. We decided that a regular driver would be needed. Robson turned out to be not only a skilled navigator of Rio's territories, but also supported us with translations when Juliana was unavailable.

In this film's pre-production period, we did not meet with the participants as one group, which was the previous experience in Haiti. In Bois Neuf the neighbourhood was very small with everyone knowing each other and they discussed raids that they had all experienced. The Complexo da Maré was a network of favelas over a large area, with the participants who agreed to collaborate with us offering their stories from different parts and in different incidents.

We returned to the Maré Arts Centre to screen our Haiti film to a ballet class. The students and teacher gave up one of their classes and were keen to see the role and impact of the Brazilian army on a UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti. The post-screening discussion raised issues such as the colonisation of Haiti, surprise at the level of violence used, and the methodology of participatory practices. Artur, a local young filmmaker, commented that in the immediate aftermath of the film there was silence, which he said was, 'because of the power and poignancy of the stories and because they resonated with their own experiences of security forces in the favelas.'<sup>13</sup> He also described the film as 'delicate,' because no violence was shown and participants were prioritised. Such an insightful observation was welcome, given our decision not to use available social media footage of the impact of the killings. This approach also informed our editing decisions in the proposed film on police violence in Brazil.

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13 Fieldnotes, 15 October 2019.

### *Filming*

On several occasions we had to postpone filming because police raids closed off entire favelas, effectively ceasing all activity, whether attending school, buying food, or getting to work. Given our limited period of stay, we decided to use the time to record more general cutaway scenes, or B-roll as they are sometimes referred to.

When filming in the Maré favela complex, we were told not to film in the streets; it was explained that a police patrol had recently toured the area accompanied by an undercover journalist, whose material showing young men smoking marijuana and carrying guns was later broadcast on national television. Since then, no filming was permitted. However, she suggested we go onto the roof and film wide shots that would not identify anyone; this provided us with rich material – high shots of the streets – for later editing. We proceeded to the Arts Centre, where we had shown the film on Haiti, and recorded a ballet class, which offered a contrasting image of the favela community to the one usually represented in mainstream media.



Illustration 3: *Right Now I Want to Scream* (2020)

### *Participants*

Ana Paula is one of the founder members of the Mothers of Manginhos, set up to highlight the deaths of their children during raids by police forces, and to raise these injustices in public fora. She agreed to be interviewed in a downtown office rather than in her home, because of fears over safety. As she talks, she points to the image of her son,

Jonatha, on her T-shirt, one of several portraits of young men killed by police in her favela. She agreed that she could take us to the Mothers' memorial in the favela later. When we arrive there, she and two other mothers decide to re-enact their annual event of placing a banner of their boys' portraits beside the memorial which has the victims' names on it, along with the names of mothers who have died through 'sadness,' or supporters who have been killed for their outspokenness; this latter includes Mariella Franco, a Black queer activist and counsellor, who was shot dead by right wing militias for her campaigning against state injustices.<sup>14</sup> This moment of remembering, of pointing, of co-operating with each other, became the opening scene in the film, and encourages us to 'be present' with the women in the favela in a way that sit-down interviews can be difficult to achieve.



Illustration 4: Maes de Manginhos, *Right Now I Want to Scream*, 2020.

We visited a small town outside of Rio where Daniel and his family had moved to an abandoned house; they had left their previous home because of fears of reprisals after Daniel had accepted an invitation by the Public Defenders' Office to take his case against the police to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Daniel had been shot two years previously when he was 19 years of age returning home from his employment as a baker. In what became known as the Salguera case, an ambush had been set up by police, who dressed in black and were unidentifiable; the ensuing attack left at least seven

<sup>14</sup> De Mattos Rocha, Lia. 'The life and battles of Marielle Franco.' *Open Democracy*, 20 March 2019. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/life-and-battles-marielle-franco/>.

young men dead. Two other mothers, who had lost their children in the same raid that injured Daniel, did consider contributing, but later declined to take part; safety was a primary reason for their decisions. We also interviewed a lawyer, Daniel Lopez, from the Public Defenders' Office, who was taking the Salguera case to the Inter-American Commission, and who provided a useful legal context.

Joelma's son had been caught up in the same security force ambush that Daniel had been injured in. Márcio was 23 when he was shot dead. Joelma is very emotional, both pained and angry. She describes the scene when arriving at the spot where the shootings happened. The police initially refuse to let her close, but she protests and, despite being pushed back, insists on seeing his body. She is determined to stay by his side, fearing that the police might disappear his body or interfere by planting weapons, both of which have been done by the police on previous occasions. She stayed with his body throughout the night.

Bruna's 14 year-old son was killed on his way to school in the Maré. She describes his last words to her as she cradled him in her arms; 'Didn't they see me with school clothes and supplies, mom; for God's sake, mom, what did I do?' Since his death she has worked for the community organisation Redes de Maré<sup>15</sup> supporting others who have suffered grief and loss at the hands of the police.

Vanessa Sales Felix's 8 year-old daughter, Agatha, was killed by a police bullet while they were sitting in a taxi on their way home from visiting the nutritionist and shopping. Vanessa provides the film's title when she describes how she misses her daughter and how all her young ambitions were cut short; 'Right now I want to scream ... I want to talk about Agatha, because I like to talk about her, and if I could get to the top floor and scream and talk about her, I would, because she was an unbelievable girl, yes, I would talk, I would scream, that's why I came here and said yes.'

### *Community*

In the Morro dos Prazeres favela we interviewed Cris, a trainer in educational development. We also asked about filming the nearby playground, where children were playing football – at a distance to avoid recognition – but Cris advised against this, as she did about

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15 Redes da Maré, <https://www.redesdamare.org.br/br/>.



filming residents going up and down the steps. In both cases it was because a lack of agreement with the local gang – a recurring issue with filming in the favelas. We also recorded Luciana, a member of a women's group that campaigns on behalf of their children, such as the number of days lost to schooling because of police raids; she describes the experience of being subject to a raid when helping out in a school and the children having to take shelter by diving under their desks. She and a colleague had to grab the youngest children in their arms and carry them to safety.

*In the Alemão favela complex, a community organiser, Camille, explains the impact of police violence on her community and on her own children:*

They are not possible targets, they are already targets, because they are black, because they are victims of stray bullets. So, it is desperate for the child, we are listening to the children, they know what is happening today, and they are very afraid, not a little, but very afraid.

### *Experts*

Janaina de Assis Matos, a Civil Police Officer and member of the Anti-fascist Police Officers' movement, laments the militarisation of police work at the expense of more intelligence and community engagement. She says there is little police training in human rights, and that 'the war on drugs today is not a fight against violence but a fight against a portion of the population, the peripheral population, especially Black people'. Commenting on the impact of violence on police officers, a little told aspect of the 'war on drugs,' Leonardo Bueno, from the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, reveals that 'a report from the Police Victims Commission of the Military Police of the State of Rio de Janeiro, ... recently showed that we have 3 to 4 absences a day from military officers due to psychiatric disorders: the Commission stated there were 1329 on sick leave.' Valcer Rangel Fernandes, a director of the Foundation, emphasised the impact of militarised police raids on community health.

In Sao Paolo, we interviewed Camilla Asano from the human rights NGO Conectas, which has consultative status at the UN, an important connection for a screening of our film at the UNHRC in Geneva. Camilla appealed for the international community to support the efforts of families and human rights defenders to challenge the levels of state violence against Black peripheral communities.

### *Editing*

Because our interest in Brazilian policing had come out of our work in Haiti, we decided early on to include some of the interviews from *It Stays With You* in this film. In a short section, we included Edren Elisma's and Jean Victor's recollections of the MINUSTAH raids, and contextualised these with an excerpt from an interview by Camille Chalmers, who makes the connection in soldiering between Haiti and Brazil. We also decided to include some television archive of General Heleno, given his centrality in both situations; a clip from GloboTV News has him declaring, 'The rules of engagement in Haiti were very flexible ... It means a guy armed with a rifle assaulting or stealing cargo becomes a target I can eliminate. And whoever did the shooting should be exempt from legal liability.' Camila Asano points out in the film that such a policy does 'not respect the constitution, because in Brazil there is no death penalty.' We attempted to interview Heleno, but he declined to respond to our requests.

The editor, Barbara Henkes, had less visual material to work with than in the Haiti film, given that we had limited access to participants' homes and neighbourhoods, but she was able to use the visual and sound recordings that we did manage to film for more audio-visual storytelling. The film, inevitably, is full of harrowing testimony and necessary contextual detail, but it has a rhythm and pace that continues to pull in and move the viewer. Neil Horner, the sound editor, provided a gentle soundtrack for the montages throughout the film, with songs providing the opening and closing soundtracks. We returned to Smithsonian Folkways for the opening song, 'Cancão da Terra' by Zelia Barbosa, from her album *Brazil: Songs of Protest*. For the song over the end credits we choose 'Haiti' by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil. They both generously gave permission to use with no charge, but the recording's record publisher, Universal, although also giving us permission, was not so generous.

### *Screenings*

The premiere took place in late 2020, by webinar because of Covid. In attendance were three people from the film, Anna Paula and Eliene from the Mothers of Manguinhos, and Aderson Bussinger from the Brazil Bar Association; also in attendance were Camila Barros from Redes do Maré and Gabriel Sampaio from Conectas. While not hav-

ing the physical presence that FOKAL had offered, the premiere was nonetheless powerful in its collective expression of determination to continue to struggle for justice.

Because of the screening of our previous film at the Caribbean Tales Film Festival in Toronto, we were invited to screen this film, albeit under conditions of Covid. We were interviewed by Canada's CTV News programme.<sup>16</sup> We have had mixed success with public screenings, with up to 26 festivals selecting it for screening and five awarding it 'Best Film.' While this is satisfactory, once again, like our experience with the Haiti film, were disappointed that more human rights film festivals did not pick it up. One consolation is that the film was screened in July 2022 by CapeTown TV, a community television station in South Africa.

With our Conectas connection, we held a film screening and side event at the UN Human Rights Council session in October 2021. Because of Covid, this was online and the post screening panel featured Ana Paula Oliveira from the Mothers of Manguinhos, Gabriel Sampaio from Conectas, Ulisses Terto Neto from the State University of Goiás, and Siobhán, the co-producer and co-director. Gabriel provided historical context, by comparing contemporary policing with the legacies of colonialism. He argues, 'In decisive moments for overcoming colonialism and creating our new elites, our national elite opted for maintaining the roots of racism ... while also consolidating a civil and criminal legislative model with repressive institutions that upheld the same foundations of the colonial model.'<sup>17</sup>

Such links between the colonial and slave-owning past, with Brazil the last country to outlaw slavery in the Americas, was made throughout our filming period. Although not included in the film for reasons of compact storytelling and the prioritisation of the participants' contributions, Gabriel's observations are an important contextualisation of the persistent racist violence perpetrated on Black favela residents.

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16 CTV News about 'Right Now I want to Scream', <https://www.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=2293636>.

17 See under Screenings at <https://itstayswithyou.com/rio/>.

## Conclusion

These two films have been the most challenging that we have worked on. The degree of state violence against civilians, with mortars and grenades fired from heavily armoured vehicles, plus firing from helicopters that inevitably inhibits accuracy of targeting, all perpetrated by those who are tasked to keep the peace, has had devastating effects on residents and neighbourhoods. Another challenge is the disparity of resources between the participants and the filmmakers that have stretched the participatory practices that we have tried to uphold. Collaboration across cultural, social, and economic boundaries, including differences of access to equipment, funding, language, distance, and motivations, such as seeking of justice, was severely tested at times. However, using participatory practices to produce the films and provide public platforms for their exhibition has enabled the survivors of state violence in Haiti and Brazil to have their testimonies heard internationally, so that their voices are not silenced. Participatory practices in filmmaking allow for conditions that create a space for building trust, for minimising re-traumatisation of participants, and for ensuring that storytellers remain co-authors of their stories. There is a spectrum of challenge/success in both sustainability and collaboration in participatory film, with conditions in Haiti proving more difficult than in Brazil. Due to Covid and political turmoil, funding was no longer available and we lost contact with our Haitian participants. We have been more successful in Brazil, where the political and social infrastructure is relatively solid, despite the rule of Bolsonaro, and maintained contact with human rights defenders up to today.<sup>18</sup>

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18 We have recently completed a film on ecoviolence in Maranhão state, 'We Fight For This Land: Ka'apor and Quilombola Communities in Brazil', available at <https://cahalmclaughlin.com/>.

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