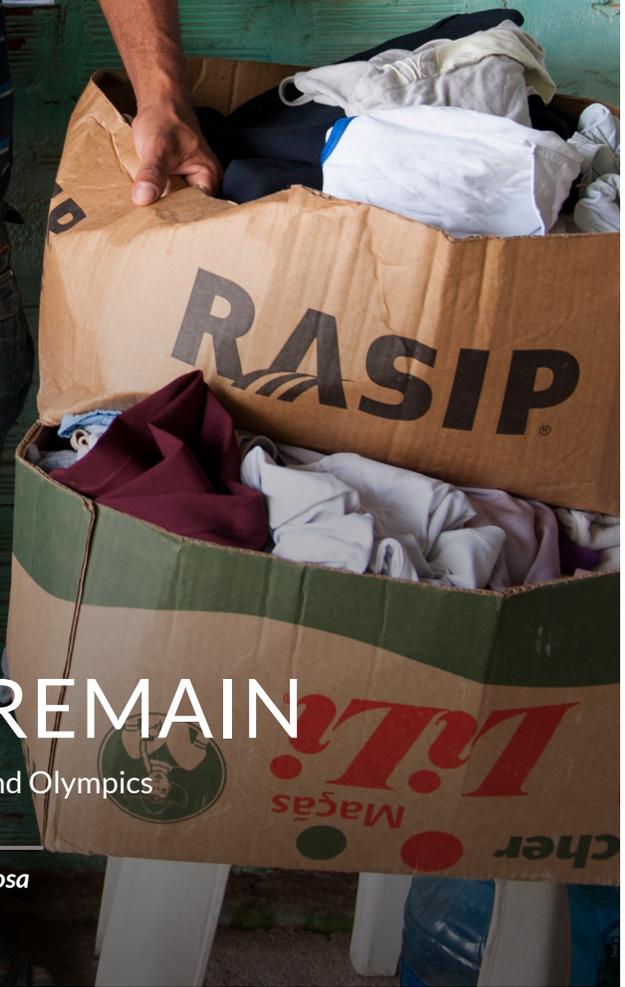




World Justice
Project



THE RIGHT TO REMAIN

Brazil's Favelas vs. the World Cup and Olympics

Photography by Deborah Espinosa

Excerpted from "The Right to Remain," available in full at: www.worldjusticeproject.org

As the world was getting excited for the 2014 World Cup, 71 year-old Yope Maria, a resident of Poco da Draga, an urban slum (called favelas in Brazil) in Fortaleza, Brazil, had little to be excited about. A few months ago, she awoke to find a large wall being erected around Poco da Draga. Residents believe the wall was intended to hide the slum from would-be tourists coming to visit the new \$136 million aquarium that the state is building next to—and possibly on top of—Poco da Draga.

The new aquarium, expected to be the second largest in the world, is good news for the state's economy, but bad news for Yope Maria, who may be evicted to create a parking lot for the aquarium. She has lived in Poco da Draga since she was a teenager, raising ten children, 14 grandchildren and a great-grandchild.

Yope Maria has not received any communication from state or municipal agencies about plans for eviction or resettlement, but she has watched other favelas disappear under bulldozers. "They did not discuss their plans with the community. But Poco da Draga has been here 108 years. . .where will we go?"



Today, hundreds of favelas exist throughout Brazil, with over 600 in Rio de Janeiro alone. In fact, favelas are growing at a quicker rate than cities, posing challenges for law enforcement as crime and drug gangs are becoming concentrated in small areas. Now, with the economic potential to be reaped from the 2016 Olympics, the officials are taking the opportunity to remove these eyesores and safety threats.

Unfortunately, many favela residents do not learn their homes will be destroyed until they are marked for removal with an "X" in spray paint.

According to Brazilian law (including the Brazilian Constitution, the City Statute of Brazil, the City Plan of Fortaleza, and the Organic Municipal Law), favela residents become the owners of the land they occupy after five years of uncontested squatting. Unfortunately, few citizens understand how to enforce this right. There is also another problem: evicted residents must prove ownership of their property to be eligible for compensation or relocation. But the vast majority of residents have no legal documents, and the process of obtaining compensation can take months or years.

One local organization—Urucum—has stepped in to help. Comprised of lawyers, communication professionals, and artists, Urucum is using a seed grant from the World Justice Project to help favela residents defend their housing rights and document the disappearing slums using handheld cameras.

Above: Yope Maria has lived in her favela for more than 50 years, raising her children, grandchildren, and great grandchild there. Now, she may be evicted to create a parking lot for tourist activities.

Right: Many residents moved to Poco da Draga because of their beachfront location, where a skilled fisherman can make decent wages. With the impending demolition of their home, residents are unsure how their livelihoods will be affected.





Urucum's approach may seem unusual; they are not a typical legal aid clinic, relying on the courts to provide justice. Instead, Urucum is building a coalition of support comprised of universities, communications firms, NGOs, the public defender's office, and others. Urucum is also working with favela residents to create their own maps; favelas are absent from the city maps, despite being some of the most densely populated parts of the city. Creating these maps helps residents feel visible as citizens.

Above, left: Although the community of Poco da Draga has been established for 108 years, there is no regulation of infrastructure or sanitation. Behind a member of Urucum, the community's raw sewage is dumped into a marsh.

Urucum's approach mirrors WJP's own approach to strengthening the rule of law—a strategy relying on collaboration between multiple sectors, professions, and disciplines. It takes more than lawyers and judges to advance the rule of law; everyone in a community has a role to play and a shared interest in greater opportunity and equity.

Above, right: Unfortunately, many residents do not learn their home will be bulldozed until their houses are marked for removal with spraypaint.

There are no easy answers when it comes to the question of what to do about Brazil's favelas. Despite the complexities, WJP believes that approaches like Urucum's will help build a stronger culture of rule of law. The broader the collaboration, the more likely it is to take root and succeed over time.

Urucum's collaborative approach in Brazil's favelas mirrors WJP's own strategy for strengthening the rule of law—integrating multiple sectors, professions, and disciplines.

A girl evicted from her home in the favela Alto de Paz stands outside her temporarily home in a neighboring favela—also slated for demolition.





About This Photo Essay

This essay is part of an ongoing series documenting pilot programs incubated at World Justice Project (WJP) convenings and/or launched with WJP seed funding. Since its founding, WJP has provided network connections and over \$1,000,000 in funding to 80+ pilot programs on five continents. These practical, community-led solutions to discrimination, corruption, violence, and more represent a broad cross-section of disciplines and approaches to strengthening the rule of law worldwide. Pilot programs are catalogued on the WJP website, where they can be searched by geography and issue area.

About The World Justice Project

The World Justice Project (WJP) is an independent, multidisciplinary organization working to advance the rule of law around the globe. Establishing the rule of law is fundamental to achieving communities of opportunity and equity—communities that offer sustainable economic development, accountable government, and respect for fundamental rights.

Our work engages citizens and leaders worldwide and from all work disciplines to advance the rule of law. Through our mutually reinforcing programs of Research and Scholarship, the WJP Rule of Law Index®, and Engagement, WJP seeks to increase public awareness about the foundational importance of the rule of law, stimulate government reforms, and develop practical programs at the community level. Learn more: www.worldjusticeproject.org