

**CITIES OF GODDESS: ROLES AND EXPERIENCES OF WOMANHOOD
IN THE MILITARIZED FAVELAS OF RIO DE JANEIRO**

**CIDADES DE DEUS: PAPÉIS E EXPERIÊNCIAS DA MULHER NAS
FAVELAS MILITARIZADAS DO RIO DE JANEIRO**

Amanda Pimenta da Silva¹

Abstract: The story of the 2002 film “City of God”, which was based on a book with the same name, is totally centralized in male characters and ignores almost completely the strong presence of women in the *favelas*, whose characters are relegated to lovers of the male characters or their mothers, with little or no focus on the experience of womanhood in such places. However, the often-neglected role and experiences of women in the context of urban violence play a pivotal role in the understandings of the dynamics of its state of affairs. Women are gang members or supporters, partners, mothers, messengers, carers for the wounded, and women endure the challenges of motherhood in violent spaces and struggle for justice for the victims assassinated by the police forces. Moreover, with the militarization under covered in “pacification programs”, gender relations are reinforced. This paper aims at a gendered approach of the situation and consequences of the militarized favelas of Rio de Janeiro, in which women’s roles and experiences help to shape the understanding of the state of affairs of such areas.

Keywords: feminist studies; governmentality; militarization; securitization; Brazilian favelas.

Resumo: A trajetória do filme “Cidade de Deus”, de 2002, que teve como base um livro de mesmo nome, é totalmente centralizada em personagens masculinos e ignora quase completamente a forte presença feminina nas favelas, cujos personagens são relegados aos amados personagens masculinos ou suas mães, com pouco ou nenhum enfoque na vivência da feminilidade em tais lugares. No entanto, o papel e as experiências frequentemente

¹ Graduate Student at The American University in Cairo (“AUC”). Specialist in International Relations and Diplomacy from UNICURITIBA. Bachelor’s in Law from Universidade Regional de Blumenau. This paper was written as part of the “Law and Patriarchy” class at AUC, under the supervision of Dr. Mai Taha. June 2019. amandapimenta@aucegypt.edu



negligenciados das mulheres no contexto da violência urbana desempenham um papel central na compreensão da dinâmica de seu estado de coisas. As mulheres são membros de gangues ou apoiadoras, parceiras, mães, mensageiras, cuidadoras de feridos, e as mulheres enfrentam os desafios da maternidade em espaços violentos e lutam por justiça para as vítimas assassinadas pelas forças policiais. Além disso, com a militarização coberta pelos “programas de pacificação”, as relações de gênero são reforçadas. Este artigo tem como objetivo uma abordagem de gênero da situação e consequências das favelas militarizadas do Rio de Janeiro, em que os papéis e experiências das mulheres ajudam a moldar a compreensão da situação em tais áreas

Palavras-chave: Estudos feministas; governamentalidade; militarização; securitização; favelas brasileiras.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The 2002 film “City of God”, which tells an anecdotal story of violence in a favela (slum) of Rio de Janeiro with the same name, is a reminder that the societies we tend to take for granted can actually be a luxury, as posed by the film critic Stephen Holder in a New York Times article right after its release.² The film, based on a book with the same title, portrays the deterioration of the peripheries of Rio due to drug trafficking, crime, and poverty, and how it has been transformed into a war zone so dangerous that anyone risk being shot dead. The story is totally centralized in male characters, ignoring almost completely the strong presence of women in the favelas, whose characters are relegated to lovers of the male characters or their mothers, with little or no focus on the experience of womanhood in such places.

In general, the role and experience of women in the context of urban violence is often neglected. Even as lovers or mothers of the male figures that tend to be central to the conflicts, women’s experiences play a pivotal role in the understandings of the dynamics of such places.

² See Stephen Holder. *FILM REVIEW; Boys Soldiering in an Army of Crime*. Jan. 2003. The New York Times.



Women are gang members or supporters, partners, mothers, messengers, carers for the wounded, as they tend to undermine or condone violence, or challenge or conform to prevailing cultures.³ Furthermore, the motherhood and the “struggle for justice” for the assassinated by police forces are strong aspects of the gendered violence in Rio’s favelas. Women endure the challenges of raising children in such violent spaces. Additionally, women seek for years the conviction of policemen that have killed their sons, brothers or nephews, while building and maintaining a network of solidarity and support.⁴

The patterns of violence and how it is reproduced in marginalized communities are highly gendered, and also intersects with aspects of identity, such as race and social class. The majority of the favela’s population is black and pertains to the poor or low middle class. As explored by Kimberle Crenshaw in her theory of intersectionality, black women occupy positions both physically and culturally marginalized within the dominant society.⁵ In the context of the Brazilian favelas, a new social layer is added: the concept of *favelada*, which means a female who was born or currently lives in a favela. Being *favelada* is different from being poor or living in poor suburbs. The social stigma surrounding the favelas is responsible for the formation of a new category of an aspect of social identity.

The stigma of the favelas has its origins in the history of settler colonialism, which encompasses the project of elimination of natives, and the slavery (and its abolition and the aftermath) of African blacks.⁶ Settler colonialism in Brazil was initially marked by “pacification” of the indigenous populations which included expropriation, elimination, confinement, and assimilation of entire communities in an effort to “civilize” them, aiming to produce individuals capable of working for the capital accumulation of the settlers.⁷

But settler colonialism is not only a process that history leaves behind. In the case of the favelas, it continues to happen. Most of the favelas in Rio de Janeiro still permit the accumulation of capital and considerable investment. There are even outsiders investing in the most stable and

³ See Polly Wilding. “New Violence”: Silencing women’s experiences in the favelas of Brazil. *Journal of Latin American Studies* 42, no. 4 (2010): 719-747. At 722.

⁴ See Adriana Vianna, Juliana Farias. *A Guerra das mães: dor e política em situações de violência institucional. cadernos pagu* 37 (2011): 79-116.

⁵ See Kimberle Crenshaw. *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color*. *Stan. L. Rev.* 43 (1990): 1241. At 1250.

⁶ See Bruno Huberman. *Pacification, Capital Accumulation, and Resistance in Settler Colonial Cities: The Cases of Jerusalem and Rio de Janeiro*. *Latin American Perspectives*. (2019): 131-148.

⁷ *Id.*



developed favelas and taking considerable profits out of it.⁸ Additionally, racialized populations are important for preserving the neoliberal model of capital accumulation, since it maintains the workers' fragility. The greater the number of unemployed and fragile workers, the more dissatisfied people who need to be controlled so as to not disturb the social order or interfere with capital accumulation.⁹ As consequence, even the poor people of Rio de Janeiro will eventually fit into the economic prevailing model, since there is the fear of becoming a *favelado* (male form of *favelada*).

However, in order to safeguard the capitalist model in the city of Rio de Janeiro and its relation to the favelas, there was the need to coordinate a broken and supposedly violent society and control the surplus population.¹⁰ With the redemocratization process in Brazil¹¹ there was a breakdown of the state's monopoly over violence. There was a shift in actors and motives – from predominantly political to predominantly criminal. Some factors are emphasized to explain the rise of a new violence and the state's failure to address it properly, such as “the impact of social exclusion, the pull of easy money through the trade of narcotics and other illicit goods, and the lack of other economic opportunities”.¹²

The urbanization processes in the city of Rio de Janeiro led to the formation of communities invisible to the State. The establishment of favelas challenged the control of power by subverting the disciplinary gaze of the State apparatus.¹³ As a consequence of the State's absence and its ability to enforce the Law in such communities, there was the institution of alternative sources of governance by gangs and drug traffickers, which eventually formed communities internally safe and relatively free from interpersonal violence.¹⁴

However, the colonizers' fear of the colonized as a potential threat to their project of capital accumulation and to the colonizer's life justifies violent measures to protect the settlers,

⁸ See Boaventura de Sousa Santos. *The law of the oppressed: the construction and reproduction of legality in Pasargada*. Law & Soc'y Rev. 12 (1977): 5. At 109.

⁹ See Bruno Huberman. *Pacification, Capital Accumulation, and Resistance*. At 136.

¹⁰ See Marielle Franco. *UPP: a redução da favela a três letras: uma análise da política de segurança pública do estado do Rio de Janeiro*. 2014.

¹¹ The democratization process in Brazil consisted in the installation of a democratic regime after the previous authoritarian regime.

¹² See Polly Wilding. “*New Violence*”.

¹³ See Jeff Garmany. *The embodied state: governmentality in a Brazilian favela*. Social & Cultural Geography 10, no. 7 (2009): 721-739. At 723.

¹⁴ See Janice E Perlman. *The myth of marginality revisited: The case of favelas in Rio de Janeiro*. *Becoming global and the new poverty of cities* (2005). At 9.



usually by labeling the areas where the colonized live as “dangerous” places that should be avoided, segregated and pacified.¹⁵ In Brazil, the media and the elites helped to build a discourse of favelas as “dangerous areas”. The constructed narrative was used to justify several military interventions in those communities throughout the decades.

On the eve of major sports events, such as the World Cup (2014) and the Olympic Games (2016), the state of Rio de Janeiro launched a governmental program aiming to reduce the violence in some of the most dangerous favelas of the city of Rio de Janeiro. The program subjected the residents to 24-hour surveillance and a permanent militarized presence.¹⁶ Moreover, the public safety policies adopted under the name of “pacifying units” only reinforced the penal state model, while basing itself on the speech of “social insecurity”.¹⁷

In places where the social and political structure is disrupted and the population is controlled, such as the militarized favelas, women tend to suffer great consequences in their daily life. The gender relations are reinforced in such contexts, and it becomes clear when the problem is addressed through the perspective of state discrimination. The way in which women are affected in areas in a perpetual state of armed conflict is produced through law, policy, routine behavior, and the use of police discretion towards black and marginalized women.

This paper aims to address the gendered violence in the favelas, and the roles and experiences of womanhood in these violent places. It encompasses the perceptions beyond the active and passive roles women are often portrayed as having, such as the experience of motherhood and the struggle for justice for the assassinated by police forces. Finally, it will explore the consequences of the militarization in the favelas of Rio, and how the gendered relations are reinforced by the heavy military presence.

2 RIO FAVELAS, THE MILITARIZATION PROCESS, AND THE EMBODIED STATE

*“I just want to be happy,
To walk freely in the favela I was born,
And to be able to be proud,
And to be aware that the poor have their place*

¹⁵ See Bruno Huberman. *Pacification, Capital Accumulation, and Resistance*. At 136.

¹⁶ See Chandni Desai, and Heather Sykes. *An ‘Olympics without Apartheid’: Brazilian-Palestinian solidarity against Israeli securitisation*. *Race & Class* 60, no. 4 (2019): 27-45.

¹⁷ See Marielle Franco. *UPP*.



*My dear authority, I don't know what to do,
 With so much violence, I am afraid to live
 Because I live in the favela and I am much disrespected,
 The sadness and happiness walk side by side in here,
 I say a prayer to a protector saint,
 But I am interrupted by firing of machine guns,
 While the rich live in a big and pretty house,
 The poor are humiliated in the favela.
 I can't stand this violence any longer,
 I just ask the authority a little bit more competence”*

“Rap of Happiness” - Cidinho & Doca

2.1 The formation of the favelas

Officially called “subnormal agglomerations” by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics¹⁸, *favela* is the term for slums, squatter settlements, poor outskirts, irregular settlements. It is difficult to say how many favelas exist today in Rio de Janeiro, but by the time Perlman published her book in 2005, there were at least 752 favelas with approximately 1.65 million inhabitants.¹⁹ The definition of favela go beyond their “illegality”, since most of them now have *de facto* tenure; it also cannot be defined by their lack of infrastructure, since almost all have access to water, sewage, and electricity; nor they can be defined by the precarious construction materials, as most of the houses are now made of brick and mortar. A remaining distinction between favelas and the rest of the city of Rio is the deeply-rooted stigma that still adheres to them.²⁰

The favelas of Rio de Janeiro were originated due to the rapid urban growth of the region in the twentieth century and were established mainly in hills. The messy and precarious urbanization process of the city transformed the favelas in communities that contrasted with the urban lifestyle of the *carioca* (native from the city of Rio de Janeiro). The favelas were also perceived as exotic places where the black population (mostly descendants from the slaves freed some generations before) brought their beliefs, their music, and their extravagances.²¹

¹⁸ See Anjuli Fahlberg, and Thomas J. Vicino. *Breaking the city: Militarization and segregation in Rio de Janeiro*. Habitat International 54 (2016): 10-17.

¹⁹ See Janice E Perlman. *The myth of marginality revisited*. At 9.

²⁰ *Id.* At 10.

²¹ See Amanda Sá Dias. *Palestinian Refugee Camps and Brazilian Favelas as Urban Heterotopias*. Birkbeck L. Rev. 5 (2017): 81.



The formation of several favelas in the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro originated the term *favelada* (and its masculine form, *favelado*), which eventually became an extreme figure of ‘otherness’. The opposition “favela versus the city” (or favela versus “the asphalt”)²² since today is related to the manifestation of the opposition civilized/savage, rich/poor, clean/dirty, moral/amoral. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the medical discourse gradually joined the urban discourse, and the favelas started to be addressed as a “social pathology” that put the city’s beauty and health at risk.²³

Until the 1980s, the favelas were mainly represented as locations of poverty, although counterbalanced by their valorization as the land of samba and popular culture. During the re-democratization process, which happened in 1980 and early 1990, there was a shift in society’s perception of favelas, which coincided with the increase in the narco-trafficking and augmentation of urban violence in the city. Progressively, the inhabitants of favelas were identified as extreme figures of otherness, and each one of them could be acknowledged as a potential criminal. From 1990 onwards, the state’s approach to these territories was gradually security-related. Over the years, intellectuals and human rights organizations denounced the arbitrary and systemic coercion of armed interventions inside the favelas, which are now qualified as “spaces of exception”.²⁴

2.2 The militarized favelas

On the eve of major sports events, such as the World Cup, in 2014, and the Olympic Games, in 2016, the state of Rio de Janeiro launched a program part of the new public safety policies in order to improve security in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The program, named Police Pacification Units (PPU)²⁵, was intended to consist of three phases: a military invasion of the violent community, followed by several months of heavy patrol forces, and finally the training of its residents to assist the recruited military police in long-term social projects. The project was

²² The favelas inhabitants refer to the official state law of Brazil as “asphalt law”, in contrast of the “law of the hill”, or in other words, the gang laws enforced in the favelas.

²³ See Amanda Sá Dias. *Palestinian Refugee Camps and Brazilian Favelas*. At 89.

²⁴ *Id* at 90.

²⁵ In Portuguese, Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora, UPP.



projected to help the state in regaining control over territories long lost to drug trafficking, as well as to reintegrate these economically challenging communities into society.²⁶

The government of Rio justified the intervention by stating that the “pacification”/militarization consists of policies aimed at resolving the governance challenges that operate in the favela context. However, the lack of infrastructure and access to public services helps to sustain the idea that heavy security is actually a form of social control and oppression.

In order to achieve legitimacy for the military intervention and avoid public rejection, the incursions of the military police in the favelas were supported by the metaphor of “war” – “war on drugs”. It was needed the construction of a narrative of war, justified within the legal structure, to justify the territorial control and occupation done by the military. The law plays a central role in creating a framework in order to talk about “justice” and the efficacy of wartime violence.²⁷

The violence and brutality of state agents are originated and maintained within the structure of Law, in a successful attempt to introduce means of warfare into the legal framework. Efforts are being constantly made by authorities in order to legitimize tactics of violence as a way of carrying out war through law. In areas such as the favelas, known as “invisible cities” and “spaces of exception”, the state presents itself embodied unto its agents of law enforcement, and as consequence, replacing the Panoptical structure theorized by Michel Foucault.

As explored by Marielle Franco²⁸ in her master’s dissertation, militarization, under covered under the “pacification program”, was implemented as an ideological project aiming to safeguard the capitalist model of accumulation in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Militarization helps to coordinate a broken society and control the surplus population.

Many *faveladas* and *favelados* started to prefer the rule of the local gang leaders to that of the police, the latter of which have routinely abused and harassed them for years. The community itself legitimizes the actions of the parallel state by trusting the state less than they trust the drug

²⁶ See Carolyn Prouse. *Framing the World cUPP: Competing discourses of favela pacification as a mega-event legacy in Brazil*. Recreation and Society in Africa, Asia and Latin America 3, no. 2 (2013).

²⁷ Id. At 176.

²⁸ Marielle Franco was born in the favela *Maré*, in Rio de Janeiro, and was brutally assassinated on the March 4, 2018. She was a black councilwoman of the city of Rio de Janeiro, also *favelada*, mother, lesbian, socialist, and human rights activist.



traffickers. As consequence, the power of the gang leaders actually threatens the validity of the “official” authority.²⁹

Citizens who live in those militarized areas are living in a psychological state of trauma. The ones not involved in drug trafficking have to be cautious to not be mistaken for the target of the authority, the “drug lords”. The fear also encompasses the possibility of being killed with impunity by state agents, in the name of the metaphoric war created to justify such brutality. Although men are often seen as the central characters of such conflicts, as well as the main targets and victims of police brutality, the role, and experiences of women in these unique places cannot be neglected.

3 THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMANHOOD IN THE MILITARIZED FAVELAS

*“I won’t be interrupted.
I do not endure any interruption from the councilors of this house,
and I will not endure any interruption from a citizen who came here and cannot listen to
the position of an elected woman.”*

*Marielle Franco before her speech about violence against women in the favelas,
addressed in the City Council of Rio de Janeiro.
It was her last speech before being assassinated.*

3.1 The concept of favelada

To understand the concept of *favelada*, it is important to understand the construction of womanhood in Brazil, which encompasses the intersection of aspects of identity, such as race and social class.

Brazil was the last country in the West to abolish slavery, in 1888, and by that time, an estimated four million slaves had been brought from Africa to Brazil, which represents 40% of the total numbers of the slaves brought to the Americas.³⁰ In the time of slavery, the slaves used to work in the house of the aristocracy, but to live in separate buildings, called *senzala*. Black women from the *senzala* were usually objectified and sexualized by their “masters”, usually white men. The stigmatization of the black female perpetuated even after the abolition of slavery.

²⁹ See Jeff Garmany. *The embodied state*. At 724.

³⁰ Laird Bergad. *The comparative histories of slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.



In this context, in the twentieth century, white women were expected roles that almost did not demand from their emotional, intellectual, and economic autonomy.³¹ As for the black women, on the other hand, it was expected a different social and cultural conduct.

Favelada, as a political subject, usually corresponds to a black woman. To identify the *favelada* as a black woman does not mean to perceive her from her phenotype, but to recognize the dimension of her condition of social subordination, which is rigorously similar as experimented by black women. In relation to the black woman, gender, and race articulate to intensify the social subordination of the feminine. In the case of the *favelada*, these two dimensions are associated with the layers of poverty and socio-spatial segregation, intensifying the inequality framework that she is subjected.³²

3.2 The roles of women in the favelas

In Rio's favelas, women's experiences in relation to violence frequently lie at the thin line between public and private expressions of violence. The policymakers tend to emphasize a certain types of violence, such as police and gang brutality, within an implicit hierarchy based on visibility and death rates. As consequence, discussions of the violence phenomena rarely goes beyond the largely male protagonists to consider a wide range of actors, including women, and hidden and non-lethal forms of violence.³³

In the context of urban violence women are often assumed to be victims, and their existence is materialized when an act of violence brings their existence into relief either as accidental victims or as grieving partners or mothers. Occasionally, women are represented as exotic aberrations when their involvement in crime is 'discovered'.³⁴ Similarly, when women lead a gang or have power in a criminal activity, they are often portrait as "ladies of crime", in an attempt to sexualize their role as criminal women.

The experiences of women in the favelas, however, are much more nuanced. The dichotomy "offenders versus victims" neglects the volatility of front lines, where violence is

³¹ Nilza Rogéria de Andrade Nunes. *Mulher de favela: a feminização do poder através do testemunho de quinze lideranças comunitárias do Rio de Janeiro*. PhD diss., PUC-Rio, 2015. At 175.

³² *Id.* At 185.

³³ See Polly Wilding. "New Violence". At 722.

³⁴ *Id.* At 733.



constructed, negotiated, reshaped, and resolved as perpetrators and victims try to define and control the society they find themselves in.³⁵

As gang members or supporters, women's interactions with violence may range from active participation and supportive roles to passive sympathy or dissent. As posed by Polly Wilding, women "protect their partners, support gang members in jail, incite violent takeovers, hide guns or carry drugs, or in some cases are directly involved as traffickers".³⁶ Moreover, women's response to male gang membership may range from opposition, imitation or rejection to admiration, dependency, autonomy or subordination, although the responses within this range might well be the result of gendered power imbalances resulting from coercion or a perceived lack of choice.³⁷

Women often are partners to gang members, and not rarely there are incidents within the favelas in which women betray their partners by communicating their crimes to the police. Such situations can occur when they are being threatened or abused by them, or when the breakup is not an option, since they might get violent and don't accept it. The nature of violence against women that are partners of gang members is highlighted by the fact many of these men have easy access to firearms.

3.3 Motherhood in the favelas

In the private sphere, women are frequently trying to encourage, protect, educate, control and punish their children. In the majority of the favelas, women are the main carers of children as well as the central income earner in their households, roles that are challenging to juggle. In many cases, however, the central female figure is not necessarily the biological mother, but other relatives or even neighbors might assume the role of primary carer.³⁸

Women are also responsible for educating the children, and often it involves physically reprimands and punishments, which are commonly constructed as "education" rather than abuse. In such violent places, it is often questioned whether the violence used by mothers to educate their children is linked to the structural violence that mothers themselves are subjected to, or by

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Id.* At 734.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Id.* At 736.



the extremes of violence on the street from which mothers are trying to protect their children from.³⁹

There are three main objectives in a mother's life in the favelas: to protect their children from the violence of "the streets", to educate them in order to avoid the use of narcotic substances, and to protect them from being co-opted to drug gangs and to crime in general. Nevertheless, it is not rare situations in which the "natural order of things are inverted", as the popular knowledge in the favelas addresses the situation when mothers have to bury their children, especially due to stray bullets.

While it is not suggested that men do not also suffer emotionally from the deaths in the favelas, women are more likely to deal with the aftermath of killings of children or innocent victims in general. More women than men have been involved in justice campaigns following assassinations.⁴⁰ Throughout the years, women are being the protagonists of the "struggle for justice" by creating a network of support and political organizations in order to seek conviction of the policemen that have killed their sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, nephews, or nieces.⁴¹

The solidarity network and women's organizations helped to raise the voices of *faveladas* into the Judiciary, City Councils, NGO's, and other political arenas. For some of these women, it was the first time they had the chance to use high heels, and this simple act would be celebrated if the need was not heartbreaking for them. It usually takes years and a huge effort for a mother to finally sit in Court to watch the judgment of her son's executioner. The vast majority of them are acquitted.

In this context, the symbol of the "mother" is often opposed to the symbol of "state". This opposition is intrinsically gendered, as the feminine word "mother" in Portuguese contrasts with the male word "state". The male state is usually seen as the direct perpetrator of their son's assassination. The male state is also seen as the one who denies them justice for their son's death.⁴²

For women in favelas, the difficulties of different aspects of womanhood are exacerbated due to the control that gangs impose over residents' behavior. However, the recent militarization in the favelas challenged the state of affairs of such places, and a new layer was added to an

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Id.* At 739.

⁴¹ See Adriana Vianna, Juliana Farias. *A Guerra das mães.*

⁴² *Id.* At 92.



already complex situation. The rules imposed by the gang members are confronted by the heavy presence of state armed forces. Again, the role and experiences of women assume a complex aspect, due to the gender relations of such circumstances.

3.4 Militarization and its effects on women's life

The militarization under covered by public security policies reinforces the already complex situation in the favelas and the gendered violence which exists in such communities. The military presence creates a situation in which women's bodies become the site of the battle used by different groups. The women's perception of the situation addresses a general feeling of incertitude regarding the violence and the rules enforced in such places. The gang rules are gradually losing their enforcement, while the military personnel is unable to enforce the official law.

What researchers actually found out is that violence against women went up because of the military occupation in the favelas. Before the state-sponsored program, the penalization of violence against women was dealt with harshly by the drug cartels, whilst after the military, there was almost no deterrence for such crimes.⁴³

In the context of militarized favelas, mothers who lost their children assassinated by military forces have to continue to live surrounded by the presence of the representation of their children's murderer.⁴⁴ Furthermore, with the public opinion being in favor of the pacification program due to the narratives of "war against drugs" widely propagated by the media with the support of the elites, even the possibility of investigating and persecuting assassinations of innocent victims is reduced.

Finally, the strict social control of the military also frustrates the young generation of women that cannot have access to leisure or culture. There are also abuses, such as military personnel wanting to know where people live, what they do for a living, why they are carrying their personal objects, how they could buy a car, and so on. The invisible cities are finally visible through the eyes of the embodied state represented by the officials carrying heavy weaponry.⁴⁵

⁴³ See Anne-Marie Veillette. Nilza Rogéria de Andrade Nunes. *As mulheres e os efeitos da pacificação das favelas no Rio de Janeiro: compreendendo o gênero na política de segurança*.

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ *Id.*



The military personnel considers everyone as criminal. The stigma of *favelada* is, once more, reinforced. This time, not to the city, but the stigmatization is brought within the favelas, from the uniformed presence of the state. With the militarization programs, women are reduced to partners of criminals, mothers of criminals, daughters of criminals. Women are, again, silenced, oppressed, and stigmatized.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although women are not the primary target of the conflict in the favelas, they are the main ones who are left to deal with its social, political, and emotional consequences. Additionally, to assume women are passive agents and victims in the context of urban violence fails to acknowledge the nuances and contradictions of their experiences of womanhood.⁴⁶

In December 2018, Rio's governor went to Israel in order to buy drones to be used as weapons in the metaphoric wars against drugs. He was also clear when stated that "what is happening in Israel will happen in Rio de Janeiro", followed by several statements about the possibility of state agents "shoot to kill"⁴⁷. What he actually wanted to address was the existence of an authoritarian effort to construct a new legal approach that will give the possibility of state agents to "shoot first and ask later". The law enforcement in the Brazilian favelas is transforming through legal narratives in order to give state agents a sort of "license to kill".

The new approach of the Brazilian government is to prevent the cases of targeted killing to be investigated and reaching the Courts. As consequence, the symbol of women struggling for justice may be extinct. The gendered violence in the favelas will be reinforced, and women will be silenced and condemned to mourn their dead in the private sphere of their homes.

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⁴⁶ See Polly Wilding. "New Violence". At 735.

⁴⁷ See The Times of Israel. *Far-right Rio governor likens drug dealers to Hezbollah, vows to act like Israel.* 17 July, 2019. Available at <https://www.timesofisrael.com/far-right-rio-governor-likens-drug-dealers-to-hezbollah-vows-to-act-like-israel/>



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