"Empowering Music

Revitalizing the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro Through Cultural Expression

Evelia Johnston

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Supervised by Dr. Zilkia Janer

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"Alongside technological innovation there has been extraordinary urban activity… fortifying the social fabric of bars, restaurants, chance encounters on the street, etc. that give life to a place. Enhancing the quality of life in this way enables a city to attract and retain the innovator indispensible to the new creative economy."

- Manuel Castells

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1 http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/southamerica/brazil/7880013/Festival-Brazil-Samba-on-the-South-Bank.html

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Introduction

Amidst the chaos of downtown Rio de Janeiro, there exists a myriad of honking automobiles and mopeds pumping dark clouds of gas into the surrounding air. While cars are stopped in traffic, a small boy walks up to the driver's seat of each vehicle and gently hangs a piece of flannel over the side mirror. The flannel is packaged with a note saying: "This is not an assault. This is simply an honest request for help. Buy this flannel for only (R$1.00), a ticket, or a pass. Thank you. God Bless."[2]

This one note exemplifies much of the perceptions of the urban poor living within the city limits and the little means in which the urban poor are forced to survive off of. It acts as tangible proof of the perceptions of the people from the *favela*, the Brazilian shantytown, as solely violent. Also, it provides proof of the miniscule amount this group lives on. Unfortunately, the favelas of Rio de Janeiro have grown in insurmountable amounts over the past few decades by reasons relating to the massive influx of rural to urban immigration and the insufficient governmental responses to the social and economic unrest within the favela.

The favelas in Rio de Janeiro now act as their own nation within a nation Different Brazilian governments have ignored the needs of the lower classes overtime and has forced any representation and urban development to come from within the favela itself. As a result, a number of citizen's actions movements for social reform have arisen from within the interior of the favela. Many of these movements focus on using music, dance, art and any other form of cultural expression to bring life, hope, and meaning back

[2] All translations from the Portuguese are my own.

into an area that has been so suppressed over the decades. As a result of the city's history of suppression, a lack of proper government representation, and the success of internal cultural groups, projects promoting social reform, with the use of cultural expression as the vehicle for change, often times have been proven more effective in attaining the goal of bettering the lives of the residents within the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, than has the aid provided by the government.

The catalyst for what eventually became the modern day favela, stemmed from the histories of Afro Brazilians, slaves, and the indigent poor who have been suppressed since the colonial era. The continued growth of these informal housing areas stemmed from a line of corrupt and negligent governments. Both accounts emanated directly from the process of globalization, which molded Brazil's place in the global sphere and the favela's place within the context of Brazil itself.

Understanding the Formation of the Favela:

It is important to understand the history of the favela in Brazil, not only to see how it was formed but also to see the history of supression that has occurred within Brazil. These experiences of subjection are so apparent among the line of ancestors of the *favelados*, or the favela resident's, today. The development of the favelado community can be seen in the exploitation of Brazil from the 1700s to present day and the massive urban migration influx. It is because of these experiences that the ancestors of the favelados have been continually forced into the lower realm of the suppressed and the abandoned seen today in the Brazilian favela.

A History of Suppression

The formation of the favela in Rio de Janeiro can only be understood within the context of early globalization and European expansionism during the 16th century. Julio Cesar Pino provides an explicit look into the history of Rio de Janeiro and the favela in his book, *Family and the Favela: The Reproduction of Poverty in Rio de Janeiro*. Pino states, "It was Brazil's place in the international division of local economies that denied hundreds of thousands of men and women participation in the workforce of Rio de Janeiro and forced them to live in shantytowns."[3] This understanding of the complexities of networks among nations that arise as a direct result of globalization and the increase in transportation and intercommunications technologies, accounts for Brazil's place within the global economic sphere. Brazil's vast land, natural resources, and people were historically exploited for the promotion of Western economic gains and as Pino argues, this sets the foundation for the country's current state in the world economy. The extraction of raw material in third world nations by the Europeans and the relocation of Africans into those nations to provide free labor, are arguably intrinsic to the process of early globalization.

From the very formation of the urban center itself, Rio de Janeiro has had a history of suppression by the colonial Portuguese. In 1502, Portuguese sailors entered Guanabara Bay. The sailors believed they had landed in the mouth of a large river and called the land they found "Rio de Janeiro" (River of January). Guanabara Bay became the most important docking station for Portuguese ships going to and from the Western World. In 1565, the city was permanently settled by the Portuguese and shortly after,

[3] Pino, p. 21.

sugar plantations and other agricultural processes were established. In order to cultivate Brazil's raw materials for international export, the Portuguese began importing African slaves to Brazil. These African slaves had no economic or civil rights, not even the right to a normal family life.[4] At this point, the lineage of the subordinated began within Rio de Janeiro. Subordination was clear during this time as the Afro-Brazilian slave belonged to a lower ranking and was considered inferior to the Portuguese. The history of the Afro-Brazilian slave is necessary to know in order to understand issues relating to race within Brazil and the formation of the modern favela and its residents. There is a common misconception about race relations within Brazil. Many believe that there are no social or political issues in Brazil that stem from race related topics, however, just by looking at the black community that makes up a majority of the favela population, one can aruge differently.

Barbara Browning highlights in her book, *Samba: Resistance in Motion* these issues concerning race in Brazil. "Given the economic destitution of the vast majority of black and the virtual absence of major political figures of color in Brazil, it is perhaps hard to fathom the durability of the myth of Brazilian equity."[5] Browning argues that while race may not be a topic discussed openly within the political discourse it can be seen in other ways. Race has become a substantial issue within the Brazilian favela, with a majority of the favela population being black. There exists a common feeling among the Afro-Brazilian community that the official abolishment of slavery of 1888 was a kind of "false abolition". Brazil became an independent state ruled by a Portuguese emperor in 1822. During this time, a national army and bureaucracy were installed and slavery was

[4] Maddison, p. 19
[5] Browning, p. 3

officially abolished. Nevertheless, a large labor force was still needed to extract raw materials for profit. "Slavery was gradually superseded by low wage labor as the country began to import rather than export capital."[6] This notion of "false abolition" has arisen in which many Brazilians feel that although slavery was officially abolished in 1888, new forms of slavery have remained. "Afro-Brazilians merely shifted from one kind of slave quarters to another: the favelas."[7]

Rio de Janeiro was progressing economically during this stage, yet as Angus Maddisson argues in his World Bank Comparative Study, *The Political Economy of Poverty and Equity, and Growth: Brazil and Mexico,* the rate of industrialization far surpassed the country's ability to pay for such developed processes.

> "Industrial expansion was impressive-10 percent annual average growth from 1930 to 1939. Though there were some imports of secondhand equipment at depressed prices, they were not sufficient to stimulate large-scale modernization of the industrial sector."[8]

Into the 19th century the city served as a major international port for gold and diamonds, coffee and sugar, and other raw materials. It was not until the mining boom in the mid 1960s that Rio began turning into the metropolis it is today. However, despite Rio's history as a major economic, commercial, and financial industrial center, the employment opportunities ranging from the sugar plantations of the 16th century, to the mining boom in the 18th century, and to the industrialized commerce market of the 20th century, simply were not great enough to account for the influx in the population over time into the Brazilian urban centers. Reasons for such decline in employment

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[6] Ibid,, p.19
[7] Ibid., p. 3
[8] Ibid. p. 26

opportunities include the lack of sufficient financial capital, the migration into the city as a result of the decline in Brazilian agricultural farming, and the massive population growth across the nation. The immediate industrialization of the country in order to keep up with the capitalist needs of the Western world, further pushed Brazil into a state of subordination.

In the years following the Great Depression, the working class in Rio grew bigger as a result of the migration of hundred of thousands of farm laborers from the interior of Brazil into the city and the surge in population growth in both the countryside and cities throughout the nation. Rio faced an agricultural decline in productivity in sugar, coffee, and other raw materials due to the labor-intensive methods of harvest, the low prices for farm products, and the inadequate transportation system for agricultural goods. Those farmers then moved into the city of Rio in search of jobs without any land or capital. The rural migrants who did get jobs were working in the construction sectors for males and domestic service sectors for females, and were unable to pay for housing. They unfortunately maintained their role as an inferior class to the elite. Here lies the formation of what Pino refers to as the "Sub proletariat" of Rio de Janeiro.

Pino argues that this sub proletariat group formed the foundation of the Brazilian favela in Rio de Janeiro, as we know it today. "The sub proletariat were workers obliged to sell their labor as a commodity to survive, but they lacked job security, steady wages, and union organization."[9] As rural workers progressively lost their traditional informal access to their employer's marginal land, many migrated to cities. Because they were earning far below minimum wage, flocking to the shantytown was the only means for

[9] Pino, p. 30.

survival for this group of people, who originally farmed on a small scale and who occupied land without legal sanction and were eventually expelled by the rich landowners who ruled during this time. Pino goes on to discuss how this group of people were ignored by the government, forced to relocate to the hillsides, and then left to live in poverty and dire straights.

Living in the Favela Today

The favela became the principle form of housing for the urban poor and has evolved tremendously dating back from the 1940s to present day. "Squatter settlements were the natural outcome of the industrialization of Rio de Janeiro and of the inability of industry, commerce, and the service sector to provide enough jobs for a burgeoning population."[10] The Zona Sul (The South) was the favored place of residence of the *carioca*, or Rio resident, middle and upper classes. Industry moved to the Zona Sul to follow the upper class. However, there still lacked adequate transportation from the suburbs into the city which made it nearly impossible for the urban poor to get to the areas of employment, let alone afford to live in them. "The only alternative left for many of the poor was to construct their own homes above the city. Hillside homes offered propinquity to the workplace. The trek of the poor up the hills was an economic decision."[11] The Brazilian escarpments that are characteristic of Rio de Janeiro are exceptionally steep and difficult to climb. They reach up to 2,500 feet in height.[12]

[10] Ibid., p. 21.
[11] Ibid., p. 40
[12] Roett, p. 1

The favela residents and the existence of the favela itself were largely ignored by the government until 1950, when the government gave statistical recognition to the favelas for the first time ever. The National Census Bureau of Brazil in 1950, described a favela as having the following features:

1. Group of buildings or residences formed by fifty or more units
2. A predominance of shacks or shanties of a rustic type, constructed principally of tin strips, zinc plates, or similar materials
3. Construction without a license or inspection, on land belonging to third parties or unknown owners
4. An absence of a sewer network, electricity, and telephones
5. A non urbanized area without streets, house numbers, or street signs[13]

The shacks forming the favelas are created by beating the dirt of a small bit of land into what would then be considered a floor. Then using, either clay or mud, favela residents would mold pieces of bamboo together to act as walls. Roofs are made of tin cans or cardboard. Big containers are placed on top of structures or around the favela in order to collect the rain that fell, which once acted as the residents' sole water supply. Fortunately, by 1960, 15,589 of their crude homes were connected to city water supply.[14] However, the containers of water collecting rainwater are still often used, despite the high potential of contamination. These containers provide the perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes carrying yellow fever and malaria, which is still among the biggest killers of children in the Brazilian favela community today. The favela version of a street is a dirt alley full of garbage, mud, and sewage. The abundance of garbage is not a proper reflection on the hygienic practices of the resident of the favela, but rather the result of

[13] Pino, Page 38
[14] Ibid., p. 53

the garbage dump the city provided being too far away from the favela to be of any use. A kitchen is the same room as the bedroom, and in most cases the same room as the bathroom. Kitchen utensils are few, and a stove is a luxury, something to be saved up for for months. A simple crate functions as a table one day and as a bed another.

The physical construction of the favela provides a visual representation as to what life is like living in the favela. It portrays what little resources this subordinated group has to live off of. The favelas are home to 20 percent of Rio's population, more than 1.2 million people all living in extremely close proximity to another spread over four slum areas. Unfortunately, the majority of these people have little access to education, health care and other social services that the government should help account for. The amount of transparency within the government or the amount of representation that is filtered down to the lower classes is little to minimal.

Where Government Has and Has Not Stepped In

The difficulties of life in the favela today are largely due to elitist nature and lack of transparency in the history of different forms of Brazilian government from the colonial era to present day. Historically, the funds and resources needed to advance the economic and social development of this suppressed group have not been there and there has never truly been any real form of governmental representation for the lower classes in Brazil until President Lula. Recently, there has greater representation of the favelas in political offices and initiatives have been established that have helped the situation within the favelas tremendously. However, the history of exploitation and the elitist forms of governments resulted in overall formation of the favela in the first place.

A History of Elitist Governments

Brazil has gone through a number of different governments and rule over the past decades. From the ruling of the Portuguese Empire during the Colonial Era, to the creation of the First Brazilian Republic in 1889, to the military coup d'état in 1964, and to the democratic institution installed today, there has been a history of suppression of the lower classes and a lack of governmental representation for them. The overarching theme present within each of these governmental rules is the exploitation of the lower classes to increase the profit gain of the capitalist elite. "Regardless of the time period, politics in Brazil have been dominated by a relatively small group of individuals who have been able to manipulate the mass of the population and define the goals of the states in their own terms."[15] It is this exploitive nature within government that has kept the favela from progressively developing.

Angus Maddisson's account of the political economy of Brazil highlights multiple instances in which the government has taken political action that ignores the needs of the lower classes and goes so far as to ensure their continued lower position within the society. "In the colonial economy, rents from abundant natural resources were cornered by the state and by large landlords from Portugal and Spain. The labor force were slaves in Brazil, with official policy designed to keep labor cheap and brutish."[16] In order for Brazil to keep up with the competitive global market, after it had opened its door to international trade, it had to maintain its abundance of raw materials and cheap labor.

[15] Roett, Page 17
[16] Maddisson, Page 10

Many of the political agencies in place over the course of Brazil's history maintained that attitude.

In 1889, when the first Brazilian republic was created, government was dominated by the ruling oligarchs. "The first republic was a decentralized oligarchy. Local authority was in the hands of the dominant landlords, who used mercenaries to guarantee their privileged access to the land and the docility of the population of former slaves."[17] During this period, voting was rigged in order to keep rich landowners in power. The lower class rural population had no real representation from government during this time. Furthermore, as agriculture was continuing to decline during this period, they could not afford to live on their property and were continually expelled by the ruling oligarchs for illegally presiding within the marginal limits of their landlord's property. As a result, much of the rural population migrated into the city and created the urban shanytown.

In the 1930s a military coup d'état forced a new regime under Brazil's first dictator, Getúlio Vargas. The military d'état was a response to the rigged elections. Vargas was commonly known as "The Father of the Poor". He was known for pushing Brazil into great industrialization and ending the agriculturally based economy, in an attempt to help the lower classes rise economically. However, Maddisson argues another view of this period of time:

> "From 1929 to the early 1980s Brazil was among the world's fastest growing economies. Some of the benefits of growth filtered down but Brazil had inherited a pattern of inequality and social relations and gross inequalities of income and education that were not substantially modified by considered acts of policy."[18]

[17] Maddisson, Page 19
[18] Ibid., p. 3

Maddisson goes on to provide a description of the political and economic atmosphere during the military coup d'état of 1964. During this period, Brazil's economy faced a slight decline. The per capita income of the Brazilian population, especially in the northeast stagnated or declined. The mass of the population had no social security and little access to education or to land. Urban slums created by rural migrants, were cleared by the military coup of 1964 by sending in the army, or sometimes by starting fires. The favelados were left to gather up their surviving possessions and forced to start again elsewhere.

However, recently there have been a succession of political leaders and governments that have helped the situation in the favelas remarkably. Luis Inacio da Silva – or Lula has made development of the favelas his priority. Lula implemented the program, "Bolsa Familia" which is a social welfare program funded by the government that provides financial aid to poor Brazilian families. It stemmed from the program, "Bolsa Escola" which sought to get greater enrollment of lower class children in schools. These programs have helped the situation in the favelas over the past few years by providing funds for education and health care. However, the history of a lack of governmental representation in the favela is still undeniable.

A Nation within a Nation

There should exist in every nation an indisputable right of government and representation that does not seem to exist for the residents of the favelas in Brazil. The favelas of Brazil exist as their own nation within the nation of Brazil and truly have no say within the political exchange of the entire nation itself. Martin Delany's description

of the nation within a nation in his book, *The Condition* can be related to the issues facing the favela residents of Rio, such as the lack of proper government representation. Delany explains:

> "That there have in all ages, in almost every nation, existed a nation within a nation – a people who although forming a part and parcel of the population, yet were from force of circumstances, known by the peculiar position they occupied, forming in fact, by deprivation of political equality with others, no part, and if any, but a restricted part of the body politics of such nations, is also true. Such then is the condition of various classes in nations within nations, even without the hope of redemption among those who oppress them."[19]

The lack of government transparency within the context of the favela today can be seen in a number of elements. The Brazilian poor face high-income inequality, inadequate education, and insufficient healthcare, to name a few. It is clear that the lower classes do not reap the benefits from a growing economy, which Brazil has experienced over the past few decades. There is no transparency in the government that shows exactly how authorities have used resources to aid the people in the favela because there still exists high illiteracy, spread of disease, and overwhelming poverty within the favela, regardless of the few efforts made by Lulu's government specifically. The lack of transparency in government is another way the Brazilian government over time has been able to continue suppressing the lower classes.

Educational inequality plays a key role in the overall income inequality present in Brazil. This deficit of educated poor, results in the continued transmission of poverty from one generation to the next. Generally, the government has given low priority to spending on education. "The quality of public education below the university level is poor and the drop out rate among pupils before they are functionally literate is large and

[19] Gilroy, p. 22

wasteful."[20] "The contradiction of work versus school has always been one of the chief obstacles to a favelado's advancement.

Income disparity is another huge issue facing Brazil that the government has yet to sufficiently solve. Income disparity is more obvious during the slave era of the 1700s, however it can also be seen during the time of the First Republic, and especially today. "The concentration of wealth is not surprising, since there was never a deliberate policy to tackle the problems of land ownership and social inequality in rural areas."[21] Maddisson discusses two reasons that could account for the large disparity in income earnings in Brazil. One reason is the predominant role of the government policy after 1964 in squeezing real wages. Evidence of a severe wage squeeze can be seen as GDP per capita in Brazil during that time rose by 5.2 percent a year while minimum wage fell by 1 percent a year. The other argument stresses the situation of high industrialization where there was fast growth with a shortage of skilled and educated labor.[22]

The issue of the lack of government transparency within the favela can also be seen by the lack of protection against the violation of the residents' basic rights. The state of Rio de Janeiro has ultimately given up on policing within the favelas and has left any form of civil organization in the hands of the drug trafficking leaders of each gang. In most cases, the police who are present within the favela are intertwined within the web of illegal drug trafficking. An article in *The Economist*, "Onward and Upward; Shanty Life in Brazil", highlights the extent to which the drug trade in Rio is apparent within the favela community. "The main brake on human achievement in Rio's favelas is the drugs

[20] Maddisson, p. 52
[21] Maddisson, p. 63
[22] Ibid., p. 83

trade. Since the 1980s, when Rio became a transit point for cocaine heading to Europe, the Brazilian state has given over the monopoly of violence in these areas to drug gangs and militias."[23] This article describes how the Brazilian police force in these areas does not aid in protecting the rights of the favelados. Regardless of their participation within the drug trade, the police in Rio have put the responsibility of "keeping the favela peaceful" into the hands of the gang rulers.

A separate article in *The Economist,"*The Bottom Line; Drugs and Violence in Rio", provides a description of the drug trade as related to violence within the Rio favelas. One reason for Rio's spectacular violence is that it has three large competing drug factions. "Because of the competition, dealers are operating at 'close to break-even'."[24] This is saying that, for example, the tension between drug gangs within Vigario Geral, Rio's largest favela, is so high because more than one gang exists within it. Gunshots are heard consistently throughout the night as gangs fight back and forth and compete with each other for control amongst the drug trafficking chaos.

The article goes on to discuss the government's role with regards to the drug trade and violence. The article points out the history of bad government within Brazil and the past mistakes made by political officials. One example of this, are the accommodations made to drug dealer factions in the hope of keeping them peaceful. The fact that the government allowed these gangs to continue in hopes they could cooperate with one another and exist harmoniously is a prime example to which the government has abandoned the favelados. The article argues that the police supply the drug dealers with most of the weapons they use. Furthermore, any police interference within the favela is

[23]"Onward and Upward", p. 81
[24] "The Bottom Line", p. 42

usually disorganized. Too many times officers will execute people in the favela at random as their way of attempting to maintain control within the favela.

In this respect, the favelados truly are on their own when it comes to protection because neither the police nor the drug dealing gang members who control different areas within the favela, provide necessary protection for the favela residents. The issue of lack of proper policing is one that has kept the favela in a state of constant fear, social unrest, and violence. For the favelados of Rio, culture provides a vehicle for representation and for hope.

The Light at the End of the Tunnel: Culture

> "*Particularly in the slave period, but also after it, there are few committee minutes, manifestos, or other programmatic documents that aim at setting down these movements' [against subordination] objectives and strategy in transparent form. It is more likely that their reflexive self –consciousness will be found in more imaginative and creative spaces. It is regularly expressed in culture rather than formally political practices."*
>
> *- Paul Gilroy*

Cultural expresion has become so successful in responding to the overwhelming presence of violence, hate, and poverty that exists within the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. The favelados are forced to not only survive off the smallest of incomes without any help from the government but must also maintain their own form of hope within the impoverished community. The role of culture can be seen as the most valuable and substantial aid in providing hope to a community so distraught with poverty and hate. The analysis of some of the cultural implementations as set forth by the Brazilian government compared to the citizen's social movement, Grupo Cultural AfroReggae,

created from within the interior of the favela, helps to understand the monumental impact culture can have in promoting urban development and social reform for the favela.

The Changing Role of Rio's Carnival

One of the quintessential facets of Brazilian cultural life is the tradition of Carnival. A look into the history of Carnival helps to understand the historical impact of this vastly rich and dynamic Brazilian cultural experience. Accounts of festivities in Rio de Janeiro can be traced back to the late 1600s during the time of the Portuguese empire. The "Entrudo" was an outdoor festivity that involved throwing water and limes at fellow neighbors. Everyone from all classes would partake in these festivities. This understanding that people of all social classes would partake in this shared experience, is the foundation of the traditional role of the carnival. Mikhail Bahktin provides one of the most well known analyses of the Carnival. "Bahktin taught us that carnivalization is a subversive inversion of power: the poor play rich, the weak play powerful. Other inversions also play themselves out. Racial inversions in Rio's carnival are readily apparent."[25] The traditional carnival was used as a way for the subordinated to find meaning and strength behind their struggles for liberation and promote their hopes and fears through cultural expression. In the case of the Brazilian carnival, cultural expression was through the national Brazilian music and dance, samba.

"I read the samba – the most popular secular dance in Brazil – as a form that narrates a history of cultural contact between Africans, Europeans, and indigenous

[25] Browning, p. 145

Brazilians."[26] The hybrid nature of samba is a direct result of globalization and the spread of cultures around the world. Brazilian samba today is an interpretation of the traditional form from the people of the favelas surrounding Rio following the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888 and it has became a symbol of Brazilian music and dance ever since. The power of samba in Brazil can be seen in Barbara Browning's, *Samba: Resistance in Motion,* a literary tribute to the study of Afro-Brazilian dance. Browning argues that samba speaks the true history of the cultural and political repression of blacks and indigenous peoples in Brazil. The same can be said about the use of the samba within the favela. The political and economic situation in Brazil has been terrible for so many and for so long that it seems inevitable that the people of the favela would lose hope. Samba provides a historical narrative of Afro-Brazilian struggles and resistance to suppression through cultural expression, that the people of the favela can use and re interpret for their own personal liberation. As Browning explains, samba was a means of communication and personal liberation during the time of slavery when much of the Afro-Brazilian culture had no voice within the social order. As Browning states, "What hope would be left if there weren't that distant, exciting rumble of samba in the air?"[27] Today, samba has made a significant contribution to the global perception of Brazilian culture as one filled with heightened elation, especially its appropriation within the Rio Carnival.

Since 1928, Carnival has been organized by "escolas de samba" or samba schools. These schools act as community associations and social clubs that provide a variety of community needs such as, educational and health care resources. They are open year round, dedicated to the construction of floats, choreographies, and costumes for the

[26] Browning, p. xxiii
[27] Ibid. p. 125

upcoming Carnival celebration each year. Browning argues, however, that the modern day samba schools of Rio do not properly reflect the tradition of samba and its adherent role in expressing the history of struggles of the Afro-Brazilian. "Some sambistas, [samba dancers] went to Rio, where they institutionalized the carnival samba schools, where today white TV soap opera stars parade topless on floats, meagerly twitching their bottoms in a weak imitation of the real thing."[28] She does offer, however, that these samba schools do demand that we rethink the concept of inclusion and exclusion among the different social classes by promoting the shared experience of music and dance between the rich and the poor, which is the fundamental theme behind the traditional carnival described by Bahktin. Furthermore, over the past decade, Carnival has been used as a sexual health awareness program in which the government issues millions of free condoms and information packets about sexual health to be handed out throughout the weeklong festivity. In 2009, 65 million free condoms were handed out throughout the celebration in order to promote safe sex.[29]

Browning brings samba to the forefront of her discussion on the role of the modern carnival in Rio. It is clear that during Carnival, everyone dances and responds to the rhythms and sounds of samba emanating throughout the "Sambadrome", the wide avenue in which the carnival parade runs through. "Everybody is in motion – but is it progressive motion or simply a circular dance which expends energy without changing the world? That's the familiar question asked of carnaval."[30] Her concerns emanate from the fact that carnival has always provided an outlet to release stress from agonizing social

[28] Ibid. p. 32
[29] Izquierdo, 2009
[30] Ibid. p. 125

frustrations, however that built up steam she argues, should be directed towards gaining political change. Browning argues that Bahktin's traditional carnival has been lost in its evolution into a more commercialized, profitable event exploited by the tourist industry to attract foreigners.

> "Whether one discovers in Carnival political inspiration or apolitical reverie, Carnival counterposes a utopian world vision to a socially constructed, culturally imagined, and experientially insistent "real world" infused by competition, hierarchy, frustration and violence. But ironically, within Carnival itself, this real world resurges in its most concentrated form."[31]

The traditional carnival is meant to invert the roles of the social classes, however, the commercialization of the Rio carnival only makes those class differences more apparent. Carnival provides a major source of income for many of the favela residents who work at confession stands, help with the construction of the festival, and with the clean up after. Unfortunately, the lower income individuals involved in Carnival are still not earning as much as they need to get by. An article in USA Today discussing the economic intricacies of the Brazilian Carnival wrote an account of a vendor at Carnival.

> "Back at his snack stand, Paixao watched tourists carry in water and snacks they bought from cheaper vendors outside the stadium's gates — a discouraging sign of frugality. 'I usually make an extra $3,000 in the months leading up to Carnival, money I've used each year to return to Angola to visit my family,' he said. 'This year, I'm preparing myself for the fact I won't be able to make that trip. The party here might still be great, but as of now the money isn't.'[32]

Carnival has become known to be simply one massive party in which thousands of people pack the Sambadromo, a wide avenue lined with viewing stands and bleachers, and party into the early hours of the morning. While others argue that Carnival is essential to the culture and tradition of Brazil. For many it has come to signify, "An

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[31] Daniel Linger, Browning. p. 147
[32] Ibid.

intrinsic pathway to self expression, a personification of one's perseverance to overcome life's darker sides, a revival, revalidation and recognition of our ancestors and forefathers."[33] The cultural significance of Carnival is undeniable, yet, currently it lacks the ability to bring about better social development for the lower income classes. This is one of the major differences between the cultural stimulation of Rio's Carnival and the socio-cultural movements that stem from the interiors of the favelas.

Another example of a cultural revitalization program implemented by the government that was not successful in attaining social reform, was the proposal for the construction of a Guggenheim Museum in downtown Rio by the state authorities. Rebecca Biron's, "City/art: The Urban Scene in Latin America" includes an essay by George Yudice, about the relationship between culture and urban development. Yudice argues that in the case of Rio de Janeiro in the early 21st century, culture has proven more effective in attaining upward social progression for the state more so than the government itself. The essay is essentially a comparative study of the two types of cultural enhancement that a city can undergo. They include, "Lavish investments in cultural infrastructure such as heritage sites, and the community based development of creative resources to deal with exclusion, marginalization, and lack of opportunities."[34] Yudice argues the proposal to build a Guggenheim museum in downtown Rio de Janeiro was less successful in promoting social and cultural progress than were the local networks and cultural groups in Rio.

In the spring of 2003, Rio de Janeiro authorities signed a contract with the Guggenheim Foundation to build a museum on a pier on the water of downtown Rio. The

[33] *Brazil Festival History",* 2010
[34] Yudice, "City/Art", p. 213

authorities believed that this museum would act as the "centerpiece of the renewal of the city's historic center."[35] A celebrity architect was to be brought in for the design of the museum and the structure would boast both size and creativity. They argued that not only would the museum provide cultural enlightenment to the residents of Rio and to tourists, it would help tremendously with the construction and development of the run down area of the piers. It was believed that the museum would raise property values substantially, allowing for higher taxes on the city, which would ultimately increase social spending. Furthermore, supporters of the museum believed, the museum would act as a unifying source for all social classes. However, the authorities were oblivious to the fact that transportation for the lower income classes into the city is near impossible and whatever costs for entry would most likely be inconceivable for the poor. Additionally, as previously discussed, with Brazil's history of corrupt elitist governments, it is less likely that any social spending would be on the favela community itself. Fortunately, there was a groundswell of opposition against the construction of the museum.

The expected costs of the construction of the Guggenheim museum were massive. "The mayor had committed the city to a 10 year period of payments for the Guggenheim Foundation, which exceeded the terms for fiscal obligations of the 2003 budget."[36] For a city marked by an overall poverty rate of 35%, an even larger deficit in the federal budget would be catastrophic. Furthermore, with the signing of the contract, the city of Rio de Janeiro would be subject to New York State Law, which the opposition argued was unconstitutional. Yudice argues that the public funds spent on this project alone would have been enough to sustain all other cultural institutions in the city for at least a decade.

[35] Ibid., p. 215
[36] Ibid., p. 218

These cultural institutions from within the favela that ensure participation from the community are such the programs the government should be investing in.

Yudice argues that the priorities of cultural revitalization in the city of Rio de Janeiro should focus on providing cultural and recreational information, providing the resources and space needed for those cultural activities, and promoting an education system with a greater presence of culture in the curriculum, instead of on the construction of high profile museums. Administrative bureaucracies should not stifle creative innovation but should enforce it. The government should provide incentives for active participation in cultural activities and should help with the coordination of different public initiatives that promote cultural wellness. Yudice argues that the role of culture should join the community together and should not be exploited for the purpose of capital gain, as the construction of the Guggenheim museum would suggest.

In sum, cultural development programs should not be based on the sole desire to increase profit gain for the city. Rather, as Yudice supports, institutions and programs should be installed that involve local communities and local creative activists because they act as the essential voice for the people and the overall community. The government should seek to develop and promote the creative potential of its own citizens, and allow the community to enter into those creative industries and markets.

Culture From Within: Grupo Cultural AfroReggae

There is little evidence of successful resistance efforts in the history of Brazil. Opposition to government and to discrimination can be seen in a few accounts of resistance in Brazil. “Popular revolts, such as that in the backlands of the Northeast

(Canudos) in 1897, were put down ruthlessly by the national army."[37] However, the most famous account of a successful revolt of a group of escaped slaves occurred in 1605, called the Palmares. However, there has been a historical lack of opposition to this prevailing political culture by other groups and classes in Brazil. Emerging social groups have chosen to emulate existing elites and their codes of political conduct, rather than to challenge or confront them. This solely further affirms the gap between the rich and poor that is so prevalent within Brazil. In the past decades, that passivity to resistance has changed dramatically with the creation of Grupo Cultural AfroReggae in Rio de Janeiro.

Comando Vermelho (Red Command) is one of the major drug-trafficking gangs within Rio de Janeiro. On July 22nd, 1993, members of the Comando Vermelho killed four local police who were involved in their network of the drug trade and were attempting to extort the gang members. The next day military police had entered the favela and shot at random to all standing by. Twenty-one innocent people were killed that day, including eight children and the family of local Evangelist parishioners. Among those massacred was Anderson Sá youngest brother. It was this event that prompted Sá to do something to demand change in the favela and end the violence that was overwhelmingly present during the 1990s.

Sá first got involved in "Viva Rio", the citizen action initiative that used culture to demand action from authorities and to communicate a new sense of active citizenship. The community initiative was created immediately after the events on July 23rd to demand justice from the authorities and to develop ways of enhancing the community's social services. It was in this atmosphere that Anderson Sá and fellow Viva Rio member,

[37] Maddisson, p. 21

José Junior who was once himself a member of the Comando Vermelho, met. The two together, turned the Viva Rio initiative into something tangible with the creation of Grupo Cultural AfroReggae (GCAR), a band specializing in hip-hop and reggae music seeking social justice and reform within the favela, Vigario Geral.

One of the primary concerns of GCAR is to steer youth away from entering a life of violence and drugs. In the documentary *Favela Rising*, directors Jeff Zimbalist and Matt Mochary entered into the favela, Vigario Geral and interviewed the residents. The documentary was able to get an inside look into the life of gang leaders and drug traders as well. The documentary provided real film from local street cameras that caught drug deals between the police and the favela residents. In one of the interviews of young boys residing in the favela, the directors were told that the young local boys would play games pretending to be different famous gang leaders of the favela. Those games would turn into reality as young as ages 12 and 13, when boys would actually join the gangs and would be given automatic guns. In the interview, one young boy said, "That's how you get the girls. Girls want to be with boys who have power and power means being in a gang. And then you save up and get a motorcycle…"[38] Later on in the documentary, the directors are filming Anderson Sá talking to a few young boys attempting to explain to them that there are other options other than violence. Essentially he was trying to send the message: "Violence is not cool". The young boys unfortunately were not convinced and one young boy went as far as to tell Anderson Sá to leave them alone. These scenes show the vulnerability of the youth within the favela. It is because of this vulnerability that GCAR seeks to end youth violence through music.

[38] *Favela Rising,* 2005

Anderson Sá and José Junior started the group GCAR to serve as a platform through which youth could express their emotions and fears and promote their creativity, instead of getting involved in gang violence. The initiative is splint into parts. One part of the group is the actual band itself that provides the recording artist aspect behind the movement. The music of the band is a combination of hip-hop, reggae, and the traditional Brazilian music of samba. Every song written by the members of the band is about life in the favela, seeking social justice, and achieving social liberty for the community of the favela. The second part of GCAR consists of the classes offered to children of the favela. The classes range from percussion, to dance, to song writing, and to capoeira (the traditional Brazilian martial arts and dance form). These classes act as alternative options for young children to get involved in the community to feel part of something, which was once only available through gang membership.

Capoeira is significant in Brazilian culture for its history as a form of cultural expression against supression for the Afro-Brazilian and indigent population. One of the oldest and most famous songs set to capoeira repeats the phrase, "cala a boca, moleque- "shut your mouth, black boy." Thus, capoeira stemmed as a form of resistance againt the discrimination of the Afro-Brazilian community "Capoeira is decidedly an Afro-Brazilian art. Prior to their captivity and enslavement in Brazil, the people of the Kongo region practiced certain kicking and games for sport and recreation." [39] In Brazil, these martial arts games were prohibited. But the people continued practicing in seclusion. The choreographic element as well as the music were added to disguise the fighting in the form of dance so the government would allow its practice.

[39] Browning, p. 92

The music of GCAR is predominantly hip-hop, which became famous for its use in the black civil rights movement of the 1970s in the United States. Hip-hop stemmed from a mixture of cultures from Africa and South America, that were joined together in the diverse urban epicenter of New York City. Globalization plays a key role in spread of hip-hop into Brazilian culture. "Brazilian and African musical patterns were annexed by and became continuous with this version of black America's musical heritage."[40] This analysis of hip-hop shows just how vast and complex the culture of oppression is within global history. A music form that was once used to gain freedom and end political unrest in the United States was intercepted by Brazilian culture and used for the same cause within the favelas of Rio. Hip-hop is "a hybrid form nurtured by social relations of the South Bronx where Jamaican sound system culture was transplanted during the 1970s and put down new roots."[41] This notion of "new roots" is pivotal to the band's overarching movement. Hip-hop and the music of GCAR act as the base for the formation of a new youth culture that wants change and uses music to create a peaceful community within the favela. GCAR seeks to revitalize the vibrant cultural traditions of Brazil back into the favela to create new forms of music and new forms of culture and to bring hope back to a community that has been so dismantled by violence and hate. The lyrics of one of the band's song, "Conflitos Urbanos" (Urban Conflicts), explicitly show this desire for change: "It's the new era, it's the new style / Of a gang that no one controls / Dance, capoeria, drums in a frenzy / Funk, hip-hop / Everything is going to change, to change, to change."[42]

[40] Gilroy, p. 108
[41] Gilroy, p. 33
[42] Yudice, p. 59

The success of GCAR musical endeavors can be seen throughout the entire favela of Vigario Geral and within the mainstream music industry of Brazil. GCAR performs within the favela numerous times in order to keep up that spirit of hope and community needed for change. GCAR performances are just as explicit in portraying emotions of the citizen's movement as the lyrics are. GCAR uses a scene in many of their performance in which they bring a metal cage on stage and the performers are trapped within the cage. The cage is used to symbolize the anger towards being trapped within the devastation of violence of the favela. The performers then slowly free themselves from the cage, which provides an active artistic interpretation of feeling of injustice and that desire to break free from the bonds of violence. The use of such dramatic and artistic performance is so influential in sending GCAR's message because it provides such active participation from the audience. "Performance produces an intimate interaction between performer and crowd. This reciprocal relationship can serve as an ideal communicative situation."[43]

This relationship between GCAR and its audience is essential to the group's success. The group relies tremendously on the harmonious relationship between community members. It is through the community that culture is initially created and shared. The community acts as the pivotal agent to the success of the band and the success of change. As stated previously, one of the major reasons why youth got involved in gang violence was to feel accepted and part of something, which is hard to come by within a community so broken by hatred and competition. GCAR seeks to restore that element of community that was once part of the favela in the 1950s. As reported in an article in *The Economist*, "Talk to elderly Cariocas (as present or former residents of the

[43] Gilroy, p. 102

city are known) about the favelas of the 1950s and they often turn misty-eyed, recalling peaceful plains with the best views in the city and plenty of good live music."[44]

Gilroy's analysis of black music in his *Black Atlantic* can be used to understand the correlation between community and music that is so crucial to the success of a citizen's movement. Gilroy explains that there is an emergence of new social desires and modes of communication of resistance, that has directly resulted in the formation of a community and collective political unit that music helps makes audible. His description of the parallel relationship between community and culture is apparent in the actions taken by favela residents in Rio de Janeiro. Gilroy argues that music is necessary to appreciate things that potentially connect people to one another, rather than focus on the divisions within the community, whether they be class or race related. There is a need to locate and understand one's culture and one's roots as a means of being in touch with other people. That understanding of one's roots and culture can then be used to identify and reconfigure one's place in exile or subordination. The success of GCAR is in its ability to understand that place of subordination not only in the context of the favela, but within the context of the greater picture, of Brazil and of the entire global network.

The community of Grupo Cultural AfroReggae and the movement of Viva Rio have formed to demonstrate to the city of Rio de Janeiro that the people of the favela are honest, that they exist, that they also can be intellectuals and creative beings, and that they too can produce such rich culture. They seek to counteract the negative stereotypes of the favela residents. Yudice's explanation of collaboration as "a necessity, the need to move away from binary thinking in social problem solving, the mixing of people and the

[44] "Onward and Upward", p. 81

desire to harness the many talents any group of people possesses, the need for the acceptance of radicals and outsiders to bring in change", provides concrete support for the success of GCAR as a movement that seeks to bring about change for the community through the joint efforts of individuals working harmoniously together to produce culture and bring back hope into the favela.

The Success of Cultural Expression

Cultural expression, such as that presented by GCAR, has succeeded in providing an alternative safety net for development and communication for the people of the favela. Culture brings the community of the favela together in order to find ways to help each other and help the community. Culture is used as a vehicle of expression and of communication. For the people in the favela, different forms of cultural expression, such as lyrics of music are the only ways to get oneself heard to the outside. The groups of people that suffer together create a stronger force for resistance against suppression, against discrimination, and against the violent gang leaders who rule the favelas. The success of GCAR can be seen by the 69 projects it has installed today, spreading through four slum communities in Rio, including ten music bands, two circus groups, one theater group, and one dance group. It can be seen with the direct impact it has on the 2,000 people joined in the GCAR community, and perhaps a much larger number of people indirectly. GCAR created a center called, Culture Community Center, situated in the heart of the favela Vigario Geral, in which all the different classes and programs exist. This center can be compared to Browning's description of the candomblé, a discrete domain which accommodates gays throughout the year in Rio de Janeiro.

> "The candomblé is a sanctuary. The world is outside is crazy. I'd see the horrifying graphic photos of street violence on the covers of the tabloids and the daily spectacle of horrendous economic violences on a people. The insanity of the world outside was what drew me to that remarkably peaceful space, where jibes were familial, almost comforting, and the fundamental work was one of healing injuries both individual and communal."[45]

The programs implemented by the group show its success within the community. One program is the Programa de Saúde (Health Program), which involves a theatrical group comprised of adolescents from Vigário Geral that makes use of circus-like presentations to provide important healthcare tips to underprivileged communities. Another program is **"**Criança Legal" or (Cool Kid), designed to give support to preschool kids through programs aimed at socializing and literacy. Children's parents must also take part in weekly meetings where they discuss issues relating to domestic violence and personal hygiene. Afro Reggae also created a production company called Afro Reggae Artistic Productions (ARPA). ARPA gives commercial support to the professional careers of the subgroups created from their social projects, specifically for the Afro Reggae band. ARPA contributes 30% of the resources obtained through the production events back to GCAR. [46]

Simply by looking at the staff involved in the number of projects and groups of GCAR, one can see where change has occurred. Many of them are young Vigário Geral residents who began working with the group when they were in their early teens and, after a number of years, have become teachers and coordinators for the movement.

> "'We are the real proof,' says Vasconcelos, who had dropped out of school and was on his way to becoming a trafficker before joining the group. 'You look at some guy who was walking around barefoot, hanging around the street, cursing at

[45] Browning, p. 156
[46] http://www.afroreggae.org/

> everyone, not respecting anybody. And now look -- this guy is educated, well-dressed, speaks well, plays percussion, goes around the world, is on the radio and television. People see this transformation -- there's no better proof.'"[47]

Whether or not one becomes a professional artist or social worker within GCAR or elsewhere, the change within the favelado community is apparent. Hope has been continually reinstalled with each program created, each performance made, and each dollar the band and production company receives and injects back into the favela.

The success of culture in attaining certain social gains can be seen in Gilroy's discussion of the bounds of politics and music. "The bounds of politics are extended precisely because this tradition of expression refuses to accept that the political is a readily separable domain."[48] As seen in the Rio favelas, certain initiatives must form and take place outside of the political realm, because in most instances that political realm has had little to do with their social progress at all. A prime example of how culture is more successful in bettering the community of the poor than the government is seen in the traditional medicinal practices seen within the favela. Residents of the favela were forbidden free access to healthcare by the government. "Public expenditure on health has been characterized by a growing emphasis on curative and a corresponding decline in preventative medicine. Resources are limited and health conditions are still poor."[49] In such cases, the favelados turned to their own traditional medicinal technique and appointed women within the favela to act as practitioners. "The squatter turned to

[47] Ibid.
[48] Gilroy, p. 39
[49] Maddisson, p. 104

curandeiras – female practitioners of medicine – who conjured up exotic recipes of herbs and spices to aid women in childbirth for example."[50]

GCAR's success can be used as an illustration of the success of cultural programs within the favela of Rio de Janeiro. Culture joins the community together and enforces the similarities between people rather than the differences. It steps in as the necessary safety net for the community where the government has been unsuccessful. The favelas of Rio de Janeiro are once again vibrating with musical tradition and dancing within the streets like they once did in the 1950s. It has given the youth of the favela another way to get involved in the community and to feel a part of something. It is this dedication to culture that has kept the youth in the favela out of gang violence and drug trafficking that is so apparent in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro.

Reflections:

"The insistence of Brazilians to keep dancing is not a means of forgetting but rather a perseverance, an unrelenting attempt to intellectualize, theorize, understand a history and a present of social injustice difficult to believe, let alone explain."
- Barbara Browning

It can be argued that the success of GCAR may not have been as influential if it were not for the age of modernity and technology we are in today. Not only do the advances in technology support their musical endeavors, in the form of recordings and performances, the spread of technology has increased the individual's active participation within the greater space of the world. Gilroy quotes author, Edouard Glissant, in *Black Atlantic* saying, "At least one of the components of our modernity is the spread of the awareness we have of it. The awareness of our awareness is our source of strength and

[50] Pino, p. 54

our torment." This is to say, that now, more so than ever before, individuals have access to information from every facet of the world simply by going on the Internet. Unfortunately, this access is not readily available for those in the favela but this notion of the increase of awareness due to new technologies is still prevalent.

In fact, one of the social projects implemented by GCAR called Rompendo Fronteiras (Breaking Barriers) promotes the use of computers in the favela. This project in Parada de Lucas, a slum next to Vigário Geral, where drug gangs have been fighting since 1985 attempts to end the gang war by providing basic IT/computer courses to young kids. The role of technology has been influential to the spread of awareness of the citizen movement's objectives around the world. "The changing physical structure of the world as well as the historical development of modern society demand that peoples of the world become aware of their common identity and interests. The situation of oppressed people the world over is universally the same and their solidarity is essential, not only in opposing oppression but also in fighting for human progress."[51] These new technologies are what have allowed the success and spread of this new creative industry to flourish worldwide

Globalization accounts for the notable relationship between "the recovery of tradition and its global circulation as a result of the innovations in technological means. In a discussion about music technology, Gilroy explains the correlation between technology and socio-cultural movements. "Additional time and increased volume made possible by the introduction of new technology became powerful factors impelling

[51] Gilroy, p. 148

restless sub cultural creativity forwards."[52] The mass production of records and music tracks allowed for its success into global spheres. As technology was advancing creativity forward, the people creating the music were advancing the community of the favela forward as well. It is because of this global circulation of information, and the access that the world has to it, that culture has been able to bridge the gap in distances of the world and create new forms of identification and cultural affinity. "In particular, the invocation of tradition becomes both more desperate and more politically charged."[53] Without this aspect of globalization, GCAR would not be able to distribute its political message in the form of music, to its global audience.

GCAR has expanded into eight countries spanning over four corners of the world. It has visited these countries and has helped other communities use the social cultural movement along with music, to combat violence and drug trafficking present within other slum areas around the world. The Brazilian members of the group will enter these foreign countries and establish classes that the movement offers in Rio and then find local educators to keep the classes in session. GCAR has had a special connection to India because of the heavy influence the Goddess of Shiva had on the group. Jose Junior speaks of his experience in India on the website of the group. He states, "When the professor started talking about Brahman, Visnua an Shiva, something came over me. I began to connect with him, especially the power of Shiva, the god of destruction and transformation."[54] This understanding of Shiva has been implemented into the philosophy behind GCAR. Junior believes that the movement within the favela acts as a destroyer of

[52] Ibid., p. 106
[53] Ibid., p. 194
[54] Junior, 2010

all preconceptions and the transformer of new, greater hopes and affirmations of life in the favela.

The history of slavery and subordination of the lower classes in Brazil from the colonial era to present day is the initial catalyst of the evolution of the modern day favela. In order to maintain such a history of exploitation of resources, land, and people, the governments installed in Brazil throughout history were also exploitive, capitalizing on the profits and luxuries created from such cheap labor forces. By comparing the cultural programs installed by the government to the citizen action movements created from within the favela, one can see the success of the community efforts. Due to globalization, the modernization of new communication technologies, the movement Grupo Cultural AfroReggae has been able to succeed on a global level, further expanding the reach of a favela community that has been historically on it own, a nation within a nation. The Brazilian favela, in empowering music and utilizing culture to revitalize the impoverished community from within, has begun to set in place the foundation needed for a greater future.

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