



SEX RAPE AND CULTURE WARS AFTER THE COUP IN BRAZIL

Tucker Landesman is a PhD candidate in Human Geography and Urban Studies at The London School of Economics. His research concerns urban governance and planning in relation to Rio de Janeiro's self-built settlements (favelas), segregation and inequality. He lives in Rio de Janeiro. You can follow him on twitter @yosoytucker.



This article was written by Tucker Landesman and published in the end of May, 2016.

Tucker is an in-law of mine, and his right to be with my cousin and to have a family with him is of great importance to me.

With this zine I want to make this intersection of personal and political extra clear.

The political situation in Brazil at the moment can have serious repercussions in the lives of people we love: the LGBT community and all women.

For Western European anarchists it might be difficult to understand why we fight for something that sounds so "pro-government".

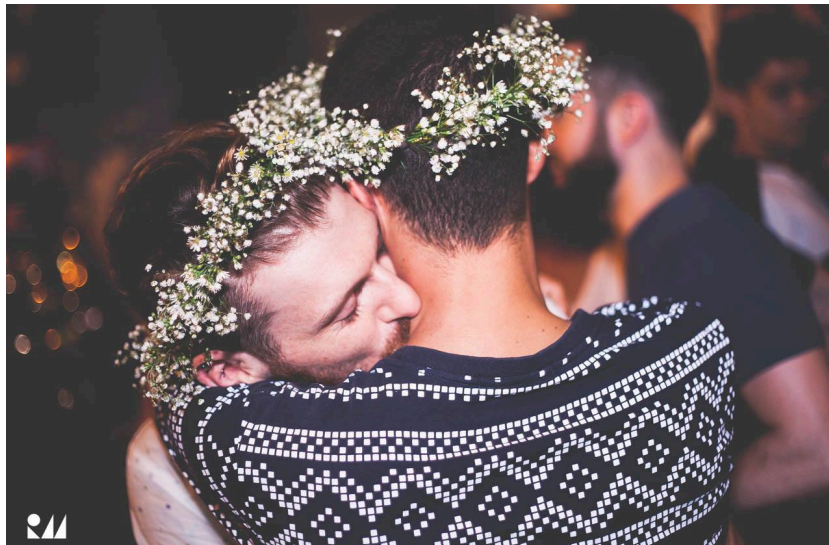
Even though I advocate for anarchist ideas, I am against Dilma's impeachment. Not because I believe in "Democracy", or in her political party, or her ideas as an individual.

Being against the impeachment means that this is the best I can do to ensure the well being and safety of my family and of the people I love given these sets of circumstances.

In these specific circumstances, classical anarchist slogans don't apply. "Whoever you vote for, the government wins". I would throw that out the window if it meant the safety and happiness of my loved ones and the right to ownership over my own body.

Democracy may create the illusion of choice, but in Brazil it does ensure some basic rights I'm not willing to let go of.

xMirna
Amsterdam, 2016



BRAZIL'S NEW GOVERNMENT MAY SELL NEOLIBERAL REFORMS OFF THE BACKS OF WOMEN AND LGBT CITIZENS

On May 12, 2016 Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff was temporary suspended from office pending a Senate impeachment trial concerning irregular, yet historically routine, accounting mechanisms to balance the budget. There is a growing consensus among critical scholars in Brazil and beyond that her impeachment constitutes a rupture in democratic norms if not a non-military coup. Recently leaked evidence indicates that her removal from office was negotiated by political elites, who sought out approval from military generals and supreme court justices, in order to shield themselves from an aggressive anti-corruption prosecution team whose autonomy was protected by President Rousseff even as it threatened the very core of her own party. Currently Brazil's interim head of state is Vice President Michel Temer, who openly maneuvered against Rousseff and has since radically shifted social and economic policy directives. The following essay reflects upon what the political crisis means for the sexual rights of women and the LGBT population.



1

Legislative Decree Proposal 395 would nullify President Rousseff's executive decree mandating that public health professionals respect transgender citizens' chosen names. Instead, this bill requires all federal bureaucracies to recognize citizens only by their name as it appears on their birth certificate, stripping transgender, travesti, and transsexual citizens of basic dignity.

Legislative Bill 5069 aims to make legal abortion in cases of rape a dreadful experience, if not effectively impossible. Anyone who aids a victim of rape to abort her fetus would be subject to two years of prison, or three years if that person is a doctor or medical professional, unless the rape was "proven" via medical examination and reported to the police.

Legislative Bill 6583, also known as the Statute of the Family, would restrict the official definition of *family* to one man married to one woman and their children. It is designed to undo the legal gains won

by same-sex couples when the Supreme Court ruled that the state must recognize same sex unions as equal in rights and benefits to heterosexual unions. It would also deny single-parent households the legal definition and privileges of being a family.

Despair.

When the schemes of Vice President Michel Temer and his co-conspirators bore fruit and he was named acting president of Brazil, he appointed an all-white all-male cabinet of ministers.

When the new minister of education got to work, he invited a small group of influential thinkers to a brainstorming session. One participant was Alexandre Frota, a forgettable soap opera actor/comedian, who is infamous for his machismo and public disgust for President Rousseff. A rape apologist, he [supposedly jokingly] confessed to raping a woman in a standup act and has made multiple rape jokes such as, "men who rape ugly women don't need to be punished, they need a hug."

Frota is a fan of [supposedly] devout Catholic Congressman Jair Bolsonaro, who dedicated his vote for impeachment to the deceased general that oversaw the brutal torture of President Rousseff when she was kidnapped and held captive by the military dictatorship. Bolsonaro also told his colleague, Congresswoman Maria do Rosário, that he would never rape her because she was "ugly" and "undeserving."

To remind us of the horror that is rape culture, two days after Frota advised the Minister of Education, news broke that a Rio de Janeiro man organized possibly 30 other men to collectively rape his teenage girlfriend as punishment for a supposed betrayal. Photos and videos of the rape were published on social media. The detective assigned to the case publicly doubted if they had enough evidence to prove it was rape, informed the press that, regardless of the victim's statement, he needed to "investigate whether or not she consented," and reportedly asked the victim if she was in the habit of having group sex.

It is important to remember that neither former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva nor Rousseff were champions of LGBT or reproductive health rights. Their governing coalition included many evangelical lawmakers known as the *bancada evangélica* (the evangelical bench). Under the Workers' Party, or "PT" (Rousseff's center-left party), the *bancada evangélica* was a minority force free to offend but ultimately kept in check. For example, they managed to take over the Lower House Congressional Committee on Minority and Human Rights and drafted legislation defending a cure for homosexuality, but their heinous projects had little chance to be signed into law.

Thank god for presidential veto.

In the current crisis, many of these representatives abandoned PT and voted to impeach President Rousseff, often citing God and their families. As acting President, Temer has moved closer to evangelical lawmakers in order to shore up congressional support – the same lawmakers who killed the Ministry of Education program known as "Schools without Homophobia" by labeling its pedagogical materials a "gay toolkit" meant to convert school children to homosexuality.

Two of the three bills mentioned at the beginning of this essay were introduced prior to the impeachment scandal. Under Rousseff they were offensive. Under Temer they are a threat. Temer and his party, PMDB (a patrimonial relic dating back to the military dictatorship), are desperate to maintain power; and they have little to gain by combating discriminatory legislation. Indeed the culture wars provide useful cover while he and his cabinet push through land reform, cut social spending, and weaken labor laws. Advancing the fundamentalist religious agenda leaves progressives battling on all fronts.

We can no longer count on the presidential veto.

As an observer of the unfolding political crisis, I am confident that nothing good will come of the undemocratic removal of a president from office. But Rousseff's ousting necessitates that the splintered Left unify, if only temporarily, to fight against the forces of ravenous neoliberalism and religious fanaticism.

There is only one way forward. Against the coup identity politics serve to unite, not divide.

Under Temer, his all-white all-male cabinet of ministers, and the onslaught of ultra-conservative neoliberalism, our bodies—queer bodies, black bodies, trans bodies, female bodies, indigenous bodies—are more than ever the targets of physical attacks and violent politics.

Our bodies are therefore fundamental sites of resistance.

Feminists have played leading roles in mobilizing protests and occupations, taking to the streets by the tens of thousands to protest machismo and rape culture. Radical queers chanted against Temer at São Paulo's Pride March, and cultural activists are weaving discourses of dissent into their art, interventions, YouTube videos, and street parties.

Allies abound and resistance remains steadfast. Growing media scrutiny, international solidarity, and diplomatic constraint may help pressure enough Senators to vote against impeachment and reinstate President Rousseff until general elections in 2018.

Hope.