

Jacalyn Barrella

15 November, 2016

Favelas and Urban planning

Slums are unfavorable urban communities, ignored by the self-serving few who receive all the basic services and benefits of any urban plan. They are filthy, overcrowded, and inhabited by very poor people. “Favela” is the word used in Brazil. Here, there are too many homes in an unmapped labyrinth of streets and alleys. Some places are only accessible by foot or moto taxi. The people living here too often lack basic services like education, sewage, health, etc. The public investment here is minimal, if even existing, because corrupt politicians do not consider slums when planning renovations. Unfortunately, six percent of Brazil’s population lives in favelas. This equates to 11.25 million people, however, this is almost certainly an underestimate, since the favela dwellers are not properly accounted for.

In Rio de Janeiro, the largest favela is known as Rocinha. This one is very close to the city, allowing it slightly better standards and conditions than those which are further away. The people have better access to basic services and jobs. Although Rocinha does have running water and electricity, sanitation is a huge problem here. There is a huge channel, and many smaller ones, that all run down beside the homes of people. Carlos Antonio de Souza, a 49-year-old a tour guide, is very familiar with Rocinha. He brings tourists to uncensored spots that are representations of life in the favela. They are often shocked at the crowding and very uneven terrain. He makes sure to note to his guest that there is a need for healthcare, education, and most of all, dignity. After moving from the Northeast of Brazil, one mother has worked hard her whole life to make a living in Rio de Janeiro. Still living within the favela with children, she feels disappointed that she could not provide more for her children, however, she is very happy to watch them attend university.

To make matters worse among favelas, drug gang corruption is often in charge. Its persistence is mainly due to the payments of politicians and police commanders. They even have their own security teams among the streets. Unfortunately, the rule used to be so prevalent, that it was a huge worry among uninvolved community members. The gang cemented the loyalty of the community through the sponsorship of events and associations. They recruited child members through parties that celebrate gang culture and honor members who have died. These people are

relentless. Finally, through all of the corruption, the Pacifying Police Unit (PPU) was placed by authorities to reduce crime.

At first, it was a war zone as the PPU fought to regain control over gang territories. The PPU has proved to be successful, as violent crime has subsided. The PPU was armed with very new officers, in hopes to promote an honest force. However, as long as there are humans, there is corruption. Amarildo de Souza, a husband, father, and favela dweller, was stopped by the PPU one afternoon while walking to the market. Never returning home, the police have been thoroughly accused by the public. He was last seen with them for “identification verification.” This has been a downfall for their reputation especially because investigation, or lack thereof, has been suspicious. The PPU says that no cameras or GPS were working that day. This is not the only case of accused corruption among the PPU. It is all very disappointing among those who seek nothing but a better life. Although it is an arduous journey living in Rocinha, many people are able formulate positive words about their situations. As they reflect on where they live, they call it Mother, Family, and Home. They note that life in a favela is difficult, but there is no victory without sacrifices.

It is a great crime that anyone has to live like this. Some may say it is because they have never worked hard enough and that these people are not worthy. However, I know better than such narrow thinking. The rich of few have enslaved the majority of the world. These people never had a chance. Favelas, in full, lack urban planning because those in charge have motives that include no one but themselves and those by which they can gain money. These areas are not regarded or included within regulations. Unfortunately, this leaves most of the people stuck for generations. People living within favelas know each other’s situations, and work to support each other. However, we are still animals. The overcrowded situations provoke stress resulting in violence and mistreatment, making the favelas dangerous or unpleasant. There is even a separation among class within the favelas. Those who are the poorest live high among the hilltops, within reach only by foot. Although it is hard to accept, things will not get better. Yes, we can place better people in political positions, but it is rare that any person has enough will or power to truly change things. For now, money is the controller, and it will rule until people become enlightened on the matter. There will always be corruption, there will always be favelas.