

Marielle, Presente! Political mourning and post-impeachment politics¹

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ABSTRACT

The death of Marielle Franco in March 2018, a city councilor in Rio de Janeiro, spurred demonstrations in major Brazilian cities, as well as full media coverage in Brazil and abroad. But the reaction to the brutal assassination of the activist, a Black female lesbian who grew up in a favela, was not mourned by Brazilians in the same way. There were those who stressed her identities and political views; those concerned with the democratic risks in this escalation of violence; those who felt the protests and indignation were undeserved or exaggerated, and didn't see her as a legitimate voice for the people she claimed to represent; and finally those who accused her of being responsible for her own murder.

In this paper, we examine some of these views, particularly of those who tried to diminish her role and importance and frame the demonstrations as a mere tool for leftist political parties. We analyze these views taking into consideration the larger ongoing Brazilian political struggle and present the interpretation that this rift in the pro-impeachment field might represent a return to the more classic Brazilian political division better represented by pre-dictatorship major parties: a conservative pro-market party, PSD; an authoritarian statist party, PTB; and a progressive, developmentalist party, PSD. Looking at the history of Brazilian liberal thought and politics, we suggest that liberals today repeat the same mistake of the postwar period: ignoring the major changes in the very essence of liberalism that occurred in previous decades.

If in 1945 they tried to return to the pre-Vargas period, ignoring social advances for fear of falling into the authoritarian populism of the hated dictator, now they try to ignore the cultural and social inclusion of minorities that happened in Brazil – and elsewhere – in the past decades, for fear of falling into the identity cooptation promoted by past governments.

Key words: Liberalism; Marielle Franco; Mourning; Street Protests; Inclusion

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