

**Earlham College**  
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**“Navigating Discourses of Sexuality: Resistance to Homophobia in Brazil” June – July 2014, Brazil**

**Background**

Homophobia is an inherent problem in Brazilian society. While Brazil has progressively taken steps forward in protecting LGBTQ rights, with the National Council of Justice recognizing same-sex civil unions since 2011, for example, the country is still a long way from ensuring the full protection of LGBTQ civil liberties. In December 2013, Brazilian lawmakers shelved a draft law that would have prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, even though the South American country has one of the highest murder rates of LGBTQ people in the world, with one LGBTQ person murdered every 26 hours.<sup>1</sup> Accounting for 44 percent of the world’s anti-LGBTQ violence, Brazil reported a staggering 338 murders of LGBTQ people in 2012.<sup>2</sup>

Growing violence against LGBTQ people has been fueled by the rapid expansion of certain factions of evangelical Protestant churches. A conservative political force, some evangelical Christians constitute around a quarter of the population and have demonstrated strong opposition toward same-sex marriage.<sup>3</sup> Mounting an increasingly threatening assault on the gay rights movement and dragging sexual issues to the forefront of Brazilian politics, certain evangelical Christian groups have been widely accused of inciting hate crimes toward the LGBTQ community.<sup>4</sup> It is important to point out that our project is not a general attack on any church or group, but rather seeks to address the clear need to raise awareness and offer a different point of view on sexuality discussions.

**Intended Project and Objectives**

The project will seek to address the problem of homophobia in Brazil, by administering workshops targeted at 15-20 year olds in the city of Sao Paulo. Brazilian youth have been particularly affected by homophobic attacks, as numerous cases of bullying in schools, related to questions of sexual orientation and gender identity, have been reported by Brazilian authorities.<sup>5</sup> By conducting a series of educational workshops to raise awareness among the youth on the problem of homophobia in Brazil, the project aims to reduce the spread of homophobic attacks and bullying among the younger generation. Additionally, by targeting the youth, the project leaders hope to provide this age group with alternative views than those advocated by more conservative groups, helping the generation of future policy-makers to better understand LGBTQ issues. The target area will be a large neighborhood in Sao Paulo. This city was selected because it is currently heavily plagued by the problem of homophobia. For example, out of the 338 victims of LGBTQ hate crimes in 2012, 45 were in Sao Paulo.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, one of the project leaders was born and raised in Sao Paulo city, and has strong connections to local groups/authorities.

If implemented, the project will take place at a critical moment for Brazil, at a time when the world’s eyes will be turned toward the South American giant for the soccer World Cup. The project will seek to capitalize on this key moment by using soccer as an essential tool to gather youth from diverse backgrounds to participate in the workshops. As mentioned by Nelson Mandela, *“sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair.”* As part of the workshops, soccer activities will be organized to attract the youth to participate in the workshops and will be used as a medium to unite youngsters from diverse socioeconomic and racial backgrounds in fighting against the spread of homophobia.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.lgbtqnation.com/2013/12/brazil-shelves-bill-banning-anti-lgbt-violence-amid-record-number-of-murders/>

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dan-littauer/gay-rights-assaulted-sao-paulo\\_b\\_4231482.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dan-littauer/gay-rights-assaulted-sao-paulo_b_4231482.html)

<sup>3</sup><http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/09/us-brazil-evangelicals-idUSBRE95805120130609>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2011/jul/02/brazil-gay-rights-evangelical-movement>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.usp.br/nepaidsabia/images/BIBLIOTECA/PDF/apresentacoes/x%20congresso%20nacional%20de%20psicologia%20escolar.pdf>

<sup>6</sup>[http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dan-littauer/gay-rights-assaulted-sao-paulo\\_b\\_4231482.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dan-littauer/gay-rights-assaulted-sao-paulo_b_4231482.html)

### Implementing the Project

- A series of workshops will be carried out using a framework developed by Jamie Utt, an Earlham graduate.<sup>7</sup> We plan to implement workshops for four youth groups, from 6/10/14 till 7/12/14. Each group will be comprised of 30 people, regrouping youth from diverse socioeconomic and racial backgrounds. Each group will attend a series of three workshops conducted over the span of one week. Each workshop will last approximately 2-3 hours. In total, we plan to have 120 participants over a period of one month. (A tentative schedule with a description of all activities that will be carried out during the workshops was drafted, but due to the page limit, it is not included here. We would gladly provide it upon request).
- The first two workshops every week will take place at the “Ruth Cardoso Youth Cultural Center” located in the area *Freguesia do Ó/Brasilândia*.<sup>8</sup> It is the first and only fully equipped cultural center dedicated to the youth, located in the periphery of Sao Paulo. Staff at the Cultural Center will provide assistance with projectors and sound systems to facilitate the running of the workshops.<sup>9</sup>
- On the second day every week, two guest speakers, namely Priscilla Bellini and Carol Stary, will address the participants and engage in an active discussion.<sup>10</sup>
- The third workshop every week will take place at “Creche Menino Jesus,” located in *Freguesia do Ó*. It is a space that is leased for youth activities upon request. Our three collaborators have worked in this space. This facility also contains an area dedicated to the practice of sports. Soccer activities will be organized there to develop the participants’ awareness on the problem of homophobia in sports.
- The workshops will be promoted among the youth groups of the region. Our collaborators (Counselor Elisabeth M. Silva, Leandro S. Batista, and Jairo Rodrigues) will be asking the youth from their churches, clubs and/or communities to attend the workshops (Our collaborators have sent us letters of support. These would be gladly provided upon request).

### Sustainability and Assessment of the Project

- The 120 individuals that will attend the workshops will have the ability to share the views they will have been exposed to with family members, friends, and other people in their surroundings, in an informal manner. The project leaders will encourage the participants to engage in further discussions with their relatives and friends outside the workshops, so as to help them think critically and reassess the mainstream views they are subject to on a daily basis.
- Individuals that show interest in undertaking activism to fight against homophobia will be encouraged to form a peer support group and advised to replicate our workshops (or design their own workshops) among other youth groups. These individuals will be given a “crash-course” at the end of the program by the project leaders on how to conduct their own workshops, and will be directed toward appropriate resources that will better equip them in undertaking further activism on this matter. Helping the youth to further spread awareness on their own on the issue of homophobia after the end of the workshops will enable this project to be sustainable in the long-term.
- The impact of our project will be assessed by following the results of the referendum on LGBTQ rights that will take place at the end of 2014 in Sao Paulo. Social workers in the area (like Ms. Silva, one of our collaborators) will be able to check numbers of cases of bullying due to sexuality in local schools. It will also be possible to look at police reports and newspapers for crimes related to sexuality. At a micro level, surveys administered on the first day of the workshops, and another one at the end, will help the project leaders in assessing how much the workshops have influenced the participants’ personal views. Moreover, the surveys will help us in assessing how youngsters are trying to pass on their key take-aways to people not involved in the workshops.

Our project shares the “Projects for Peace” goals, which seek to build understanding and break down barriers which cause conflict.

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<sup>7</sup> Since 2004, Jamie has worked as a consultant, educator, and trainer across the United States to build safer, more inclusive, and more justice-centered communities. One of the most dynamic new voices for change and inclusion today, his workshops and presentations have empowered thousands to take personal accountability for making this world a better place (<http://jamieutt.com/biography/>).

<sup>8</sup> The Cultural Center is the largest public center dedicated to the interests of young people in São Paulo.

<sup>9</sup> Marcos Ramos had his first job at this center and has a family member that works there as a manager.

<sup>10</sup> We purposely decided to have speakers that, apart from identifying with the youth, are also part of this group. **Priscila Bellini**- majoring in Journalism, involved with Peace and Justice for Palestine, and editor in chief of an online magazine- will be talking about sexuality. Bellini is a huge advocate for gender equality and works with women and Islam. In April she will be organizing the opening ceremony of the convention on Youth and Islam in Washington D.C. **Carol Stary** wishes for 2014 a world where female gamers were treated as man. She is a strong advocate for queer rights. She translates Feminist and Queer articles from English/Spanish to Portuguese.