

Justice for Marielle Franco



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By Roberto Morejon

After many years of doubt as to whether the perpetrators of a horrific crime in Brazil would finally be convicted, a jury has handed down prison sentences to the killers of prominent social activist Marielle Franco.

Ronnie Lessa and Elcio Queiroz, former military police officers, were sentenced to 59 and 78 years in prison for the murder of city councilwoman and activist Marielle Franco and her driver, Anderson Gomez.

Their execution in 2018 shocked Brazil and beyond, as the 38-year-old activist was known for her defense of Afro-descendant rights, respect for people with sexual diversity, and women's reproductive prerogatives.

From a maximum-security prison, Lessa confessed that the sociologist's murder was ordered by leaders of Rio de Janeiro's death squads, who felt their real estate business was threatened by Franco's activism.

According to the murderers, the crime, with its cruel connotations, was also intended to intimidate people who denounced the violence in the favelas and the maneuvers of the parapolice groups.

As a mother at a young age, Franco gained sympathy for her commitment to the most vulnerable.

In 2014, she was the most voted federal and state deputy in Brazil, and in 2018 she sought the vice presidency of the country, promoting a political platform focused on social inclusion and human rights.

She also promoted the university quotas promoted by the government of Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva. Those were times when honest forces were seeking both the admission of black and poor young people to higher education institutions and an orderly transformation toward a more inclusive society.

There are still parts of the police investigation to be revealed, since two influential brothers, Chiquinho and Domingos Brazao, well known in the Rio de Janeiro periphery, were arrested a few months ago as alleged masterminds of the crime.

It should not be forgotten that the cause of justice in the Franco case was taken up by the left and besieged by the ultra-conservatives who brought the notorious Jair Bolsonaro to power.



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