

A Statement on the Assassination of Marielle Franco Presente from
students of Africology 344: Global Black Social Movements at the
University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee (April 16, 2018)
Department of Africology



On March 14th, Marielle Franco and Anderson Pedro Gomes were executed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The murder of Marielle Franco; a Black councilwoman, an activist against police violence and self-identified bisexual community leader, was a huge loss for African descendants throughout the African Diaspora. Since the abolition of slavery, Black people have mobilized within the structures of the state to guarantee civil rights- especially the right to life and dignity. While citizens of Brazil are being systematically murdered by stereotypes of criminality based on their skin color, it is reminiscent of police violence here in the United States. Social justice movements that fight against the structures of racism are crucial. Public policy also needs to address the genocide of Black people in Brazil and the United States for any improvements to be sustained.

The assassination of Marielle Franco represents more than just racial inequalities in Brazil; it also represents the struggle of Black people all over the world, specifically for those of us who live in Milwaukee, one of the most segregated cities in the United States. Marielle Franco's case is a mirror of our struggle. Black people in Milwaukee are more likely to live in poverty or be incarcerated. Wisconsin has the highest rate of Black unemployment of any state and is the second highest for racial disparity in incarceration rates for black and white residents. The zip code 53206 has the highest incarceration rate in the country. The killing of Dontre Hamilton and Sylville Smith are not an exception, racial profiling by police is a reality we live with on a daily basis.

The murder of Black leaders who represent our communities and the collective effort to reach spaces that institutional racism does not allow Black people to access, is an insult to democracy. Marielle Franco will always be remembered as a soldier who fought relentlessly for the rights and liberty of marginalized people and communities. Her assassination represents the risk of using your voice as a weapon—however; her fearlessness serves as a beacon of hope and determination for Black activist around the world. We, students of the class “Global Black Social Movements” at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, publicly express our indignation and solidarity with the social movements of Brazil for the death of Marielle Franco and Anderson Pedro Gomes.

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