

# **The Living Memory of Vila Autódromo**

*A history of struggle and re-existence in a Rio de Janeiro favela*

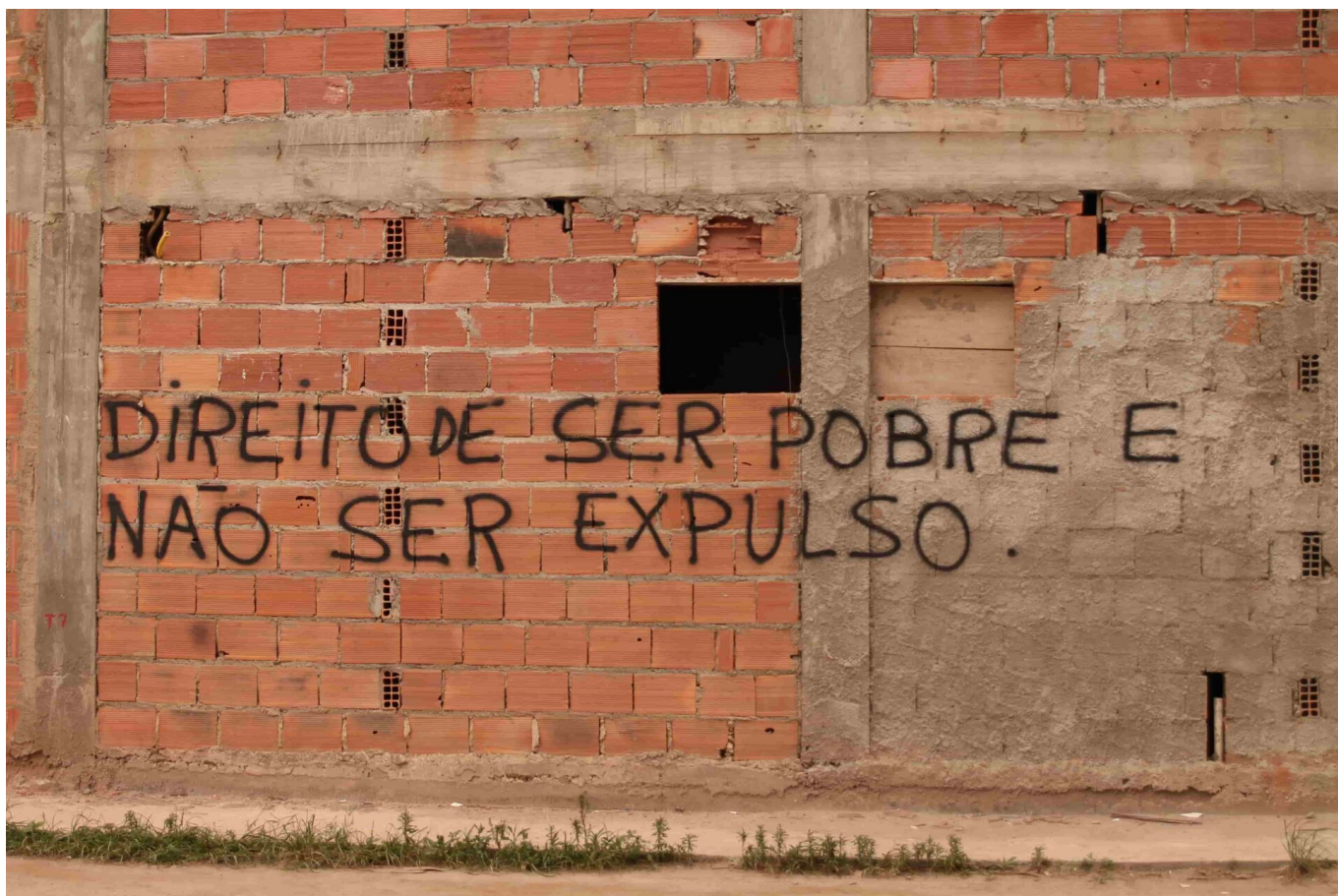
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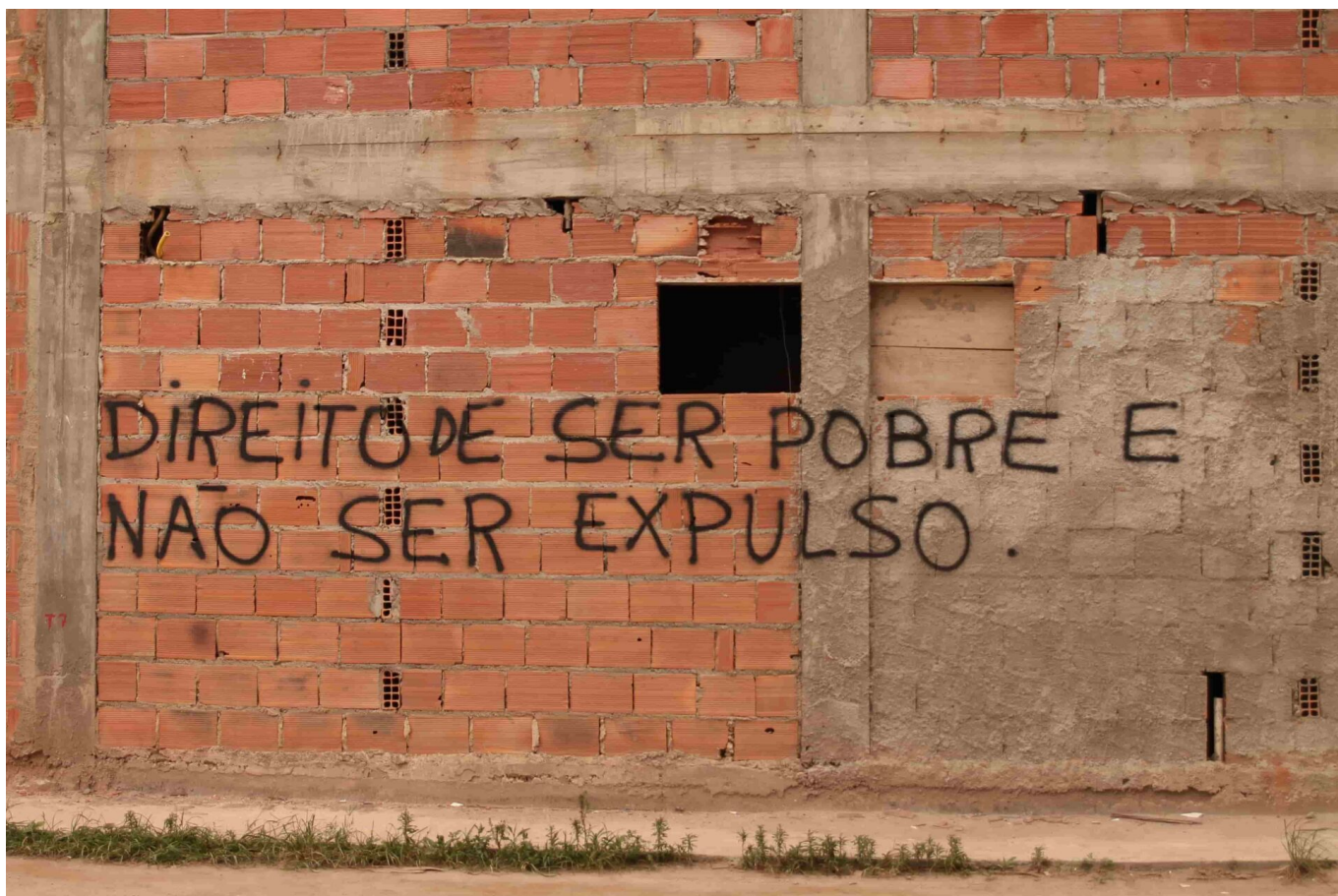
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translated by Edmung Ruge



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**T**he Rio de Janeiro city government has, since the 1990s, developed a series of urban projects that seek to promote the city to investors, tourists, and otherwise solvent users. This process, however, has accentuated dynamics of segregation in the city, with particular intensification taking place from 2009 onward, when the city of Rio was chosen to host the



2016 Olympic Games. Such urban interventions were accompanied by the forced removal of various favelas and popular neighborhoods. Vila Autódromo was especially affected owing to its location in an area destined for the construction of the Olympic Park, whose works resulted in the violent removal of hundreds of families with no alternative for permanence offered.

Despite talks of resettlement and indemnization, the removals involved insults, threats, violations of human rights, psychological terrorism, and diverse mechanisms of pressure applied by the City. However, Vila Autódromo's residents kept up their resistance, demanding their rights be guaranteed, and denouncing the violence they suffered.

Even with many residents giving in to the City's negotiation tactics — used in a context of enormous pressure — others refused indemnization, re-existing throughout the process. As the Games grew near, the City hurried to complete its construction work in preparation for the megaevent. Between the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016, an acceleration in the removal of households left the community unrecognizable, with rubble and fallen trees all around.

The first months of 2016 were characterized by tension and significant losses for the community: buildings that were especially symbolic to the community's struggle were demolished, among them the headquarters of the Residents' Association and the community playground.

In April of the same year, residents and supporters' pressure and visible resistance led to an important victory for Vila Autódromo: part of the families that had resisted won permanent residence, providing a strong example to others in popular movements for the right to the city and the right to housing. However, the struggle continues in order to keep the community's memory alive and to assure that the material and symbolic violence and destruction that marked the lives of so many evicted families are not forgotten.

## | References |

NASCIUTTI, Luiza Freire. Gênero, cidade e luta: narrativas resistentes das mulheres da Vila Autódromo. Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso de Graduação em Produção Cultural. Universidade Federal Fluminense. Niterói, 2016.