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“The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.” Marx’s dictum is so true for Brazil. The weight of the dead here is a history of cruelty and depredation, lying heavy on the many and benefitting a few, in good part inflicted by foreigners who came to ravish the Amazon rainforest, 60% of which, or about 1.56 million square miles are within Brazil’s borders. If in 1541, the conquistador Francisco de Orellana, erased all the indigenous names that celebrated local particularities to impose the homogenizing word “Amazon” (suggesting female wildness to be tamed), this name of extractivist intentions took on its dreadful postmodern form when it came to designate the “No. 1 evil tech company”, founded by the world’s richest man.

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Between Orellana and Bezos, attempts to plunder the Amazon have included the follies of El Dorado, ships carried over mountains (dismantled, by the Peruvian rubber baron Carlos Fermín Fitzcarrald and whole by obsessed filmmaker Werner Herzog), a lavish Belle Époque opera house complete with 198 chandeliers in Manaus, and the 5,509 square miles of Fordlândia, Henry Ford's rubber colony, his "work of civilization", an epic failure on the Tapajós River. These grandiose projects have taken, and are taking a terrible toll in human life, as detailed in the 7,000-plus pages of the 1967 Figueiredo Report. Lost "in a fire" the year it appeared and "rediscovered" with little ado in 2012, this document details the reality of crimes hiding behind ancient and modern rapacious fantasies and involving the connivance of the Indian "Protection" Service: rich landowners who attacked the Craos tribe and killed a hundred people; the aerial attack using dynamite that slaughtered the Cintas Largas Indians; the Maxacalis, given firewater by landowners whose gunmen shot them down when they were drunk; the Nhambiquera Indians, massacred by machine guns; two Patachós tribes exterminated with smallpox injections; the Beißos-de-Pau tribe, murdered with arsenic-laced food; and the Paraná Indians who were tortured by grinding the bones of their feet. After an official inquiry, 134 officials were charged with over 1,000 crimes but no one was jailed. In brief, every extractive project has entailed slave labor, land swindles, massacres, hired gunmen, and enormous environmental ruination.

And now there is President Jair Messias Bolsonaro who claims that indigenous tribes want to "steal" the Amazon, that environmental organizations are deliberately setting fire to the jungle to make him look bad, and who wants to "open up" the jungle for mining, cattle-raising, and hydroelectric projects, all in the interests of his two key support groups, evangelical Christians and agribusiness. He believes it's "a shame that the Brazilian cavalry hasn't been as efficient as the Americans who exterminated the Indians". If Bolsonaro is to be ousted in 2022, candidates who want to break with the past that weighs so heavily on the present will have to avoid what Marx warned of, and what Bolsonaro is still using to his own destructive advantage, namely conjuring up "spirits of the past... borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise..."

A recent poll cited by The Rio Times/ has former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers' Party (PT) leading the 2022 presidential race with 49% of voting intentions, 26 percentage points ahead of Bolsonaro. With just over fifteen months until the elections, candidates for change will need to present a clear policy platform to demonstrate to citizens that they really do aim to help Brazil escape from the dreadful tradition of dead

and present generations. Since some eleven million adults are illiterate, it would need to focus on a few key points and—since the evangelists have tried to kill popular culture—to use all kinds of grassroots means including music, theatre (a revival of Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, perhaps?), art, and graffiti to get the message across. Four closely interconnected points could represent real change: the Amazon; curbing the power of fundamentalist Christians (the “neo-Pentecostal narco-militia”); LGBTI rights as part of a general focus on human rights; and a universal basic income.

The Amazon, representing a third of the Earth’s rainforests, home to about 10% of all plant and animal species, is the source of the term “biodiversity”. Scientists disagree with claims like Emmanuel Macron’s much publicized statement that it produces 20% of the world’s oxygen supply but emphasize that by absorbing about 15% of atmospheric carbon dioxide (equivalent to half Europe’s fossil fuel emissions) it is a powerful factor in mitigating climate change. And Bolsonaro-fueled fires and deforestation in the Amazon are fast adding carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. Today the planet is “trapping twice as much heat” as it did only fourteen years ago. The Amazon is a Brazilian issue that is affecting all life on Earth.

But comments made by foreign politicians have an imperialistic ring. For (then) senator Al Gore, “Contrary to what Brazilians think, the Amazon is not their property, it belongs to all of us”. John Major talked about military action to impose (his view of) rule of law “over what is common to all in the world” and, more recently, Emmanuel Macron tried to echo Greta Thunberg with “Our house is burning”. Naturally, a jingoistic Bolsonaro retorted that “the Amazon is ours”. He alone would decide the best policy which would not “be dealt with by other countries”. Like the military dictators of the 1960s to the 1980s, he encourages ranching, monoculture farming, mining, new ports, highways, refineries, and dams, all with whatever violent means are required because his plan means colonizing and “integrating” the Amazon and its people to serve his own interests. Bolsonaro (more bragging than ironic: “Now I am Nero, setting the Amazon aflame”) wants to turn common land, natural biomes, and home to native stewards of the forest, into private land of the few. Everything and everyone can be destroyed to make way for his plans so this isn’t a matter of who “owns” the Amazon. Bolsonaro and his henchmen are a threat to the Amazon and to the whole planet, its human and non-human commons.

Egging him on are his stalwarts of the “Bullet, Beef, and Bible” caucus, which isn’t only notorious for all kinds of violent hate crimes against the LGBTI community and Afro-

Brazilian religions, but also engaged in enslavement, money laundering, and drug and human trafficking, with connections with criminal gangs and *pistoleiros*, as well as propagating scientific negationism which has contributed to the country's 500,000-plus COVID-19 deaths. The various versions of US-imported religious fundamentalism represent about 30% of the population and, by the end of 2019, evangelical lawmakers held 195 of the 513 seats in Brazil's lower house and thus have power to influence the national debate on all social issues, including the Amazon.

Their attacks on sexual rights, on this essential part of being human, are less prudish than politically motivated. Opposing them is dangerous. According to the NGO Global Witness, more human rights activists are killed in Brazil than anywhere else in the world. In 2018, the queer, black politician Marielle Franco, and her driver, Anderson Pedro Gomes, were gunned down in Rio de Janeiro, just few days after she posted tweets about police killings. The murderers are believed to be a group called the Crime Bureau, which is part of the deep state. LGBTI people are equated with animals and their violent deaths have "hit an all-time high". It's not only about homophobia but a grave human rights threat amounting to crimes against humanity because they preach the human "indignity" of anyone not in their flock, which means impunity as they are combatting "evil". And evil includes the non-Christian peoples of the Amazon. The biblical historian Brian Gordon Lutalo Kibuuka sums it up: "by co-opting evangelicals to weaken values related to human rights in the midst of a pandemic, Bolsonaro managed to give some credibility to the operation of indignity, as it provoked an appearance of moral validity of the immoral principle of destitution of fundamental rights, especially the right to life in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic."

Since such a large part of the population is denied dignity, it's no surprise that recent studies show constantly increasing inequality and drastically diminished rights to education, social security, healthcare, housing, land, and others. Meanwhile, big banks, giant finance corporations, and mega-rich haven't suffered from the pandemic. On the contrary, in 2020 the number of Brazilian millionaires rose as general living conditions worsened. If the country's past and recent history of riding roughshod over human lives and rights is to be combatted, the focus must be economic *and* explicitly political, about recovering human dignity through the idea of universal human rights, especially the most essential of all, the right to existence. Perhaps the only measure that can do this is basic income, an anti-inequality measure which, moreover, would at least statistically abolish poverty since, to work properly, it must be above the poverty line. It is transversal and

therefore inclusive, another way of thinking about the dignity of citizens. In the Basic Income Earth Network definition, it is periodic, paid at regular intervals and not as a one-off grant; a cash payment, allowing recipients to decide what they spend it on; paid on an individual basis, and not, for example, to households; paid to all, without means testing; and unconditional, without any requirement to work or to demonstrate willingness-to-work.

It *can* be financed. The obstacles aren't economic but political. Detailed studies in Spain, for example, have demonstrated that it can be paid for there with adjustments to personal income tax. But there are other ways, including changing budgetary priorities, increasing VAT and excise duties on luxury goods, with tourist, international transaction, fossil-fuel, corporation, and inheritance taxes, *inter alia*, as Casassas, Raventós, and Wark described in the case of East Timor when discussing the right to existence in developing countries. These aren't just economic ideas but another way of thinking about politics: democracy, liberty, equality, and also fraternity.

Brazil is no stranger to basic income and, in fact, has a *Lei de Renda Básica de Cidadania* (10.835, January 2004) but, as the economist Lena Lavinás writes, this “unprecedented initiative appears to be swept away by the law’s very design, which encompasses conditionalities”, and the proviso that it must be implemented “at the discretion of the executive branch”. In other words, it’s “subject to the caveats of macroeconomic policy and... its financing may be jeopardized by budget constraints and immediate political and economic issues”, including the plans of the ultra-right and evangelicals. Basic income can't fix everything but it's a sound first step for signaling a more just and inclusive kind of politics. It could also realistically help to protect the Amazon (where, for example, Bolsonaro is pitting thousands of impoverished illegal miners, the *garimpeiros*, against indigenous people who understand the land and are trying to protect it). Its underlying principles require that it must be introduced with other social measures (health, education, housing, et cetera), all of which means expanding the wellbeing and freedom of a population that hasn't been permitted to throw off the bitter legacy of colonial and postcolonial dispossession and violence.

When he was president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva once told some visiting economists that he was in favor of basic income but ruefully remarked that he may have been president, but he didn't govern. In his run for president this time round he will need to construct a strong united front to protect the Amazon from further depredation (a project in which he could drum up powerful international support), to reveal Bolsonaro's sinister deep

fanatical state for the murderous structure it is and demolish it by offering real alternatives, not only protecting but encouraging the expression of human rights, including sexual rights, of all people, but by guaranteeing the right to material existence of humans and their habitats.

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