

## PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

### Marielle Franco

*Afro-Brazilian human rights activist, councilwoman, women's rights activist*

*"Eu sou porque nós somos." (I am because we are)*

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FIGURE 1 COURTESY OF THE GUARDIAN

#### Background Information

**Born: July 27, 1979; Died: March 14, 2018**

Marielle Franco was born on July 27, 1979, Complexo da Maré, a large shanty town in Rio de Janeiro. In 2002 she earned a scholarship to the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio and graduated with a bachelor's degree in social sciences in 2006. She earned a master's degree from Fluminense Federal University in 2012.

#### Franco's Resistance

While studying in college, Marielle's course of study was public administration, and she focused on the increasingly abusive police presence in Rio. She became dissatisfied with the living conditions of people in the favelas or poor areas. Violence in the favelas was common and impacted the daily lives of Black Brazilians. During a violent altercation between police officers and drug traffickers in her hometown, a friend of Franco's was struck and killed by a stray bullet.<sup>i</sup> Franco became an outspoken critic of the police violence that disproportionately impacted Black communities in Brazil. She used social media platforms to share news of the many murders of Afro-Brazilians nationwide. Marielle entered politics in the early 2000s as a coordinator for the Commission for the Defense of Human Rights and Citizenship of the Legislative Assembly of Rio de Janeiro. In this role, she provided legal and mental health assistance to family members impacted by police violence.<sup>ii</sup>

In 2016, Marielle was elected as a city councilor. Her victory was momentous, partly because she was the only Black woman city councilor from Rio. During her short political career, Councilwoman Franco championed gender rights, was anti-war, and worked to improve the lives of impoverished Brazilians in the favelas.

Unknown assailants assassinated Marielle Franco in Rio de Janeiro on March 14, 2018. Before her death, Franco had attended a summit, 'Young Black Women Moving [Power] Structures.' During the gathering, she had publicly criticized the Brazilian President.

#### Achievements

In 2022, the 2nd Defend Black Women March, in Washington, D.C. was held in honor of Marielle. The Parisian government built a garden in Marielle Franco's honor. March 14 is acknowledged as "Marielle Franco Day in Rio de Janeiro."

## Essential Questions

1. How did police violence in Rio de Janeiro impact Marielle Franco?
2. In what ways did Marielle resist against the conditions of Afro-Brazilians who lived in the favelas?
3. How did Marielle Franco's short political career impact Black Brazilians?
4. ***"Eu sou porque nós somos." (I am because we are).***
  - a. What does this quote mean to you?
  - b. How can you practice solidarity with others in your daily life?

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.blackwomenradicals.com/blog-feed/i-am-because-we-are-marielle-franco-and-defending-global-black-feminist-solidarity>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://clac2020english6.medium.com/biography-of-marielle-franco-bbc3cb3c81d>