

**Jacintha McGahon**

---

**From:** Anna Farrant [lost\_dazed\_and\_confused@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 31 August 2006 1:07 PM  
**To:** Essay Comp  
**Subject:** Out In The Cold  
**Attachments:** essaycomp\_form.doc

One night I was, as usual, flicking through the news channels on TV to catch up on the weeks' global events. As an exchange student living in Brazil for the year, it can be sometimes hard to keep up with the outside world. I had this essay in mind, and was on the look out for a topic. I found all too many: the continuing deaths of civilians in Northern Israel and Lebanon, Sudanese refugee camps overflow, unrest in East Timor. As I watched, Juliana, our maid, crossed my field of vision on her way out after the days work. She has worked for my host family for many years, her illiteracy making it difficult to find other jobs. I glanced at her briefly, taking in her dark skin, worn-out shirt and filthy shorts. I thought of her riding her bike in the dusk, to her house barely worthy of that name, feeding her 4 children though is only 21 herself. Then I realized why was I looking for inspiration abroad, when I had been literally living with it every day for the best part of a year? My experiences and opinions on all I'd seen in Brazil were unique and valuable. And there was one thing in particular that stood out to me.

These are not safe or happy times for everyone on the planet. Although Australia still enjoys prosperity and security, the images that daily flow to our televisions remind us that not everyone is so lucky. Genocide, torture, political prisoners, refugees leaving in droves. These stories of blatant and bloody human rights violations are constantly in the head lines, horrifying the viewer and often angering the international community. Human rights violations of a more explicit nature are of course important and worthy of the attention, how ever they often overshadow the smaller less "glamorous" violations. And it is the effect of this I have come to notice during my time in Brazil.

Brazil is classed officially has a "developing" nation. It holds claim to some of the most beautiful beaches, iconic landmarks, and generous people. Many of its politicians also claim it on the rise to global greatness. However, this optimistic outlook is darkened by the country's huge social problems; Millions of homeless, enormous slum communities (called "favelas"), and social infrastructure not capable of taking the weight of demand. While Brazil is not at war, has a democratically elected government and a stable economy, the most basic human rights are not ensured to millions, like Juliana. And I have learned in my 8 months here that the denial of, or limited access to these rights, such as security, education and health care, and work conditions, can be just as devastating as what we see on TV.

It happens here everyday, in the small inland town in which I now live. On my walk to and from the rich senior school I attend, I witness the silent suffering of those unable to gain access to these most basic of human rights. For the millions of Brazilians who live around the poverty line, access to such resources as school, hospitals, and even things as basic as community and security, are only luxuries for the middle class.

Certain rights, as laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are supposed to be for all mankind. But someone seems to have forgotten to explain Article 1 to the band of gypsies that drove into my town last week. The women are easily recognized by their filthy colourful skirts and silver bangles, often with 5 or 6 children playing around them. They sit on the corners, begging to survive. They are considered the lowest of the low, and live on the very edge of society. I have witnessed shop owners shoo-ing them out of their stores with brooms, or being spat on in the street, as if they were animals. Who is protecting their right to "equal dignity"?

Or else explain Article 3 to the droves of street children who followed me through the streets of Rio de Janeiro. Explain their right to “life, liberty and security of person”. That they shouldn’t have to live in fear of the drug lords who they are often forced to work for. They shouldn’t have to sleep with one eye open, watching for the bands of de facto police (often ex- military or army) who roam the streets, regularly killing street children (at least one per day).

Or even Juliana. She obviously was never told that she had the right, according to Article 26, to attend school. That instead of having to leave school at 7, she should have been able to continue at least until high school, free of charge.

Should I go on?

It would not be accurate to say, however, that this is due to the malicious actions of the Brazilian Government. It’s not that these rights have been strictly denied. The problem is access to them. Social infrastructure such as school, hospitals, social services and adequate housing, that could give the needy access to their basic rights, are no where near sufficient to answer the demand. This is often the case, in this problem that is by no means limited to Brazil. The lower class in the United States, India, China, and even Australia would testify to this. This is a problem that is easier for governments to ignore than say, torture or wrongful imprisonment, because it is suffered mainly by the lower classes that have little influence and often no voice for change. I witness this forced ignorance daily in Brazil.

My point is, I suppose, that Juliana and so many like her, are daily having their basic human rights denied, just like the millions world wide who have been subjected to torture. Just like the refugees in Sudan. Just like the citizens of North Korea. But these abuses that daily affect the lives of millions, not just in Brazil but all over the world, rarely make the news. They are out shone, more often than not, and those who suffer because of them are pushed to the back burner, left to get cold. One day the world will be forced to address the millions who are forced to silently go with out. But until then, Juliana will still need me to read her the instructions off the back of the cake box.

---

Search for local singles online @ Lavalife - [Click here](#)