

squad" vigilantes, some of them (as in the Candelaria instance) formed by off-duty police.

Though brutal in the extreme, the raw hostility toward a certain class of children, as reflected in the Candelaria massacre, is not new. Hector Babenco's film *Pixote: a lei do mais fraco* (*Pixote: The Law of the Weakest*) stunned international audiences in 1981 with its savage images of the lives of marginalized kids on the streets and in detention. Filmed during the final stages of the military dictatorship years in Brazil, *Pixote* focused on the generation left behind by the now failed "Economic Miracle" of the 1970s. Paradoxically, during the ensuing decade of democratic reform and demilitarization (1985-1996), the situation of poor children seems, if anything, to have grown worse; and the desperate plight of thousands of loose street children briefly became the center of attention for human rights activists working both within and outside Brazil (Amnesty International 1990; MNNMRR 1991; Swift 1991; Dimenstein 1991, 1992).

Underlying the crisis of the "dangerous" and endangered street child is a deep national preoccupation with the future of Brazil, the causes and effects of violent crime, and the uses of public space, as well as with a perceived breakdown of social boundaries in a society where both rich and poor now feel threatened. With the gradual dismantling of the military police state, the former authoritarian structures that had kept the social classes "safely" apart and the "hordes" of disenfranchised, hungry, and "dangerous" poor children at least symbolically contained to the *favelas* (urban shantytowns) or in long-term public detention weakened. And suddenly—or so it appeared to a great many Brazilians—the *favelas* ruptured, and poor, mostly black, and aggressively needy children descended from hillside slums and seemed to be everywhere, occupying boulevards, plazas, and parks that more affluent citizens once thought of as their own.

The problem of Brazil's street children is emblematic of a larger crisis in Brazil: that of a failed economic development model and the cumulative "trickle up" of scarce material resources that have relegated vast segments of the Brazilian population to misery. From this arises the specter of the homeless and abandoned street child as a blemish on the urban landscape and a reminder that all is not well. Unwanted and perceived as human waste, Brazil's street children evoke strong and contradictory emotions of fear, aversion, pity, and anger. But unlike other forms of refuse, these "garbage" kids refuse to stay in the dump (the *favelas* and slums of Brazil) and they stake out the most elegant spaces of the city in which to live, love, and work, thus betraying the illusion of Brazilian "modernity." The social embarrassment caused by the visible presence of seemingly abandoned children contributes to the strong impulse to segregate, repress, exclude, con-

Brazilian Apartheid: Street Kids and the Struggle for Urban Space

Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Daniel Hoffman

It is the duty of the family, society, and the state to assure with absolute priority the rights of children and adolescents to life, health, food, education, leisure, occupational training, culture, dignity, respect, freedom, and family and community life, and in addition to protect them from all forms of negligence, discrimination, exploitation, violence, cruelty, and oppression.

—ARTICLE 227, BRAZILIAN CONSTITUTION OF 1987

Before dawn on Friday, 23 July 1993, a car with a small group of off-duty plainclothes police officers drove up to a sidewalk in elegant Candelaria Church Square in downtown Rio de Janeiro and opened fire on a group of more than forty street children (so-called *meninos de rua*), who were sleeping in a huddle near the church. Eight died—six on the spot and two at a nearby beach where they were taken and killed execution-style. Many others, not heard about since, were severely wounded in the massacre. Later, one of the ex-police officers arrested and tried for the murders, Marcus Borges Emmanuel, defended himself by saying that the children were "dangerous" and had been known to attack innocent people, including police. The police officers who participated with Emmanuel in the killings were particularly incensed because some of the children had thrown stones at a police car the day before the shootings (NACLA 1996: 16).

While the Candelaria massacre brought renewed international attention to the plight of Brazil's street children, and while child advocates staged demonstrations and vigils at the site of the killings, opinion surveys showed that close to 20 percent of the Brazilian public sided with the police vigilantes. A great many ordinary citizens reported being fed up with the "criminal," "dirty," and "disorderly" behavior of street children. Consequently, there is considerable public support for extrajudicial killings by "death

fine, and even "eliminate" street children altogether. Social shame is a greatly underestimated motivator of human action.

At the outset, we wish to express a certain discomfort with our subject matter. We are mindful that a similar situation is forming in parts of the urban United States where de facto neighborhood segregation, racism, unemployment, and poverty combine to promote a cycle of inner-city failure and violence leading to heightened police surveillance and the use of private security, some of it violent and repressive. The life prospects of African American inner-city youth in some U.S. cities, such as Baltimore, New York City, and Washington, D.C., are little better than those of their Brazilian counterparts in Rio, São Paulo, and Recife.¹ There are some striking differences, however. While homelessness in Brazil primarily affects children and adolescents, the homeless in the United States are primarily single adults, with a much smaller number of homeless mothers and children. In any case, the critique we develop here could go much further to implicate the role of transnational capital and U.S. foreign policy in supporting callous and authoritarian sentiments in Brazil, with all the negative consequences for poor children.

In this chapter, we explore some of the discourses and practices that endanger street children in Brazil today and that stand in the way of their access to newly established constitutional and legal rights. Our knowledge and perspective are limited to the particular contexts of our research: long-term, intermittent anthropological fieldwork by Nancy Scheper-Hughes since 1964 in the interior sugar plantation market town of Bom Jesus da Mata in Pernambuco (which is the primary ethnographic site of this study); and two brief periods of fieldwork in 1992 and 1996 by Daniel Hoffman concerning street children in the cities of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Recife (as well as with Scheper-Hughes in Bom Jesus da Mata). Our analysis also has been informed by contact and communications with several Brazilian activists working on behalf of children's rights.

While the overall picture of Brazil's street children at present is not encouraging, there are some signs of hope. In the past decade, a large social movement on behalf of children's rights has arisen in Brazil—one which involves thousands of individuals and many smaller grassroots organizations. The dedication of these child activists is inspirational, and their achievements are impressive: organizing street youth in the cities, exposing routine violence and the assassinations, and first advancing and later implementing constitutional reforms and new model legislation defending the rights of children. A great many Brazilians have taken to the streets to fight for the rights of the children who work or live there.²

The new Brazilian Constitution (1987) and particularly the *Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* (the Child and Adolescent Statute), which became law in 1990, are remarkable documents. The Child and Adolescent

Statute—the result of intensive lobbying by a broad coalition of Brazilian nongovernmental organizations and activists—radically transformed the legal status of children, redefined the responsibilities of the state and civil society, and mandated the creation of participatory councils at the federal, state, and local levels. The new statute replaced the earlier Minors' Code (*Código de Menores*), which was primarily concerned with preventing, controlling, and punishing juvenile delinquency. The earlier Minors' Code was little more than a penal code that failed to recognize children as people, let alone as citizens with rights. Indeed, "the laws regarded children not as people, nor as citizens, but as objects of intervention on the part of the state" (Swift 1991:8). The new statute, based on Article 227 of the 1988 revision of the Brazilian Constitution, refers to "children" rather than to "delinquents" and recognizes the rights of all children to a name, a family, a secure home, health care, an education, and to a community and the use of its public spaces.³

The new statute requires every city in Brazil to draw up its own local codes corresponding to the realities of the local community. Each municipality has been encouraged to create a "triage center," where a team of professionals can evaluate and help solve the multiple social, medical, legal, and psychological problems of each neglected street child brought to the attention of authorities. Finally, every municipality has been made to establish a community advisory council (*conselho de direitos*) concerned with implementing the new laws and monitoring the newly recognized rights of children and to elect a smaller delegation of paid workers to serve as frontline advocates and legal guardians at large (called *conselheiros tutelares*).

As enviable as these new laws are, they are not yet the internalized popular standards around which everyday practice in Brazil is organized. It is better, perhaps, to think of these revolutionary laws and codes as expressing the highest humanitarian impulse, as ideals toward which enlightened Brazilians are striving. But every day these ideals are subverted by those who continue to regard the lives of the poor (and poor children in particular) as undesirable and expendable. An analysis of the political-cultural obstacles to the extension of social citizenship to poor youth is the focus of this chapter.

THE INVENTION OF THE STREET CHILD

Semiautonomous street urchins were long a feature of urban life in Brazil, as they were elsewhere in Latin America. One could say that as long as there have been modern cities, with their promise and lure of child labor through apprenticeships, sweatshops, child prostitution, and domestic service, there have been street children simultaneously drawn to and in flight from these. In other words, there always have been poor children willing

to chance a life on the streets, often exchanging slavery with a bed for freedom with hunger (Meyer 1983). And so the visible presence of loose children working and sometimes living on the streets of Rio, Recife, Salvador, and São Paulo is not a new phenomenon. But the vastly accelerated urbanization of the past several decades, fostered by the consolidation of smaller farm holdings into larger estates designed for agribusiness and the consequent expulsions of traditional peasant squatters from their fields (Scheper-Hughes 1992: chap. 2), has contributed to an "epidemic" of loose and visibly neglected urban street children.

The social reality for poor urban children in Brazil has never been particularly kind, but there have been some changes in the ways that semiautonomous children on the streets are perceived and responded to. Scheper-Hughes recalls that in the 1960s ubiquitous street urchins of Recife and the interior sugar plantation town of Bom Jesus da Mata in Pernambuco were referred to with a blend of annoyance and affection as *moleques*, meaning "ragamuffins," "scamps," or "rascals." Moleques were streetwise kids, cute and cunning, sometimes sexually precocious, and invariably economically enterprising. (The moleque was an amusing enough popular stereotype that a candy and later an ice cream bar, chocolate covered and flaked with "dirty" bits of coconut and almonds, were each named the *pe de moleque* or "the ragamuffin's foot"!) Moleques tried to make themselves useful in myriad ways, some bordering on the criminal and deviant. Think of Fagin's boys from Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, especially the Artful Dodger, and you get the picture.

The street moleque was often a cunning pickpocket in the marketplace, and shoppers would slap their heads in exasperation when a nameless scamp they had hired to carry home the *feira* (market) basket on his head made off with their watch in the quick final transaction. While the victims of the moleque's street tactics might alert local police and the boy might be found, perhaps beaten by a cop or sent to a State Foundation for the Well Being of Youth (FEBEM) institution (the state-sponsored reform school in Recife—with all its violations of the freedom and rights of the child, see below), what Scheper-Hughes did not sense at that time was the idea that street children as a class of people were considered dangerous and untrustworthy, a blight on the urban landscape, or a pressing "social problem" against which certain interest groups (home owners, shopkeepers, business owners) should actively and aggressively organize.

Many moleques survived by attaching themselves to a middle-class household, for whom they did odd jobs in exchange for the right to sleep in a courtyard or patio. In the semifeudal world of northeastern Brazil's sugar plantation zone, a great many "excess" children of impoverished peasants and sugar mill workers were "adopted" by affluent families as extra live-in

help, domestic apprentices of sorts, thus preempting, or at least delaying, their turn to the streets. While vulnerable to exploitation by their wealthy patrons (Scheper-Hughes 1992:120-27), at least these "working" children did not have to worry for their lives.

Today, in some areas, rather than being seen as a potential source of cheap domestic or agricultural labor, poor kids on the loose are more often viewed as a scandal, a public nuisance, and a danger. This shift is reflected in the stigmatizing terms of reference by which poor children on the loose are known. Yesterday's cunning moleque is today's "abandoned minor." The latter connotes both pity for the child and blame for the neglectful mother. The even more common term *marginal*, which often is attached to older street youths, suggests "dangerousness" and incipient criminality: adolescents who have committed a crime or who are seen as just about to do so. Even the seemingly neutral and blameless term "street child" (*menino de rua*), which only recently has come into popular usage among educated Brazilians (due largely to the efforts of international agencies promoting children's rights) can take on unintended meanings. In the urban Brazilian context, the term *menino de rua* suggests that the street child is illegitimately occupying public space. Encoded in the term is a sense of alarm and impropriety: something is amiss; why is this child *in the street* and what is he or she doing there? By implication, the *proper* space for children is in the home or, at the very least, under the direct surveillance of parents who know at all times where their children are and how to recall them to the home when necessary.

Each of these terms unwittingly creates a new opportunity for radical intervention in the lives of Brazilian children, including their forced removal from the urban landscape and their temporary and illegal placement in jails, juvenile detention centers, and psychiatric facilities. But today's so-called abandoned minors and dangerous marginals are no more neglected or dangerous than yesterday's mischievous street urchins. What has changed is the inability of the modern and the new hypersegregated post-modern city to absorb the large (and growing) number of these children.

THE "STREET" IN STREET CHILDREN

During a brief season of field research in 1992 in Recife and in the interior market town of Bom Jesus da Mata, some eighty kilometers inland from the capital city of Pernambuco, we made a point of asking ordinary people, "What is a *menino de rua*?" While driving down a wide avenue in Recife, Hoffman spied some scruffy youths walking in the grass along the road. "Are those street kids?" he asked a Brazilian colleague. "Of course!" she replied. "There's no one with them. There aren't any parents." Hoffman

pushed further: "Is *any* kid on the street without an adult a 'street kid'?" In exasperation, the colleague defended her label: "Kids like these steal and sniff glue. That's why they're street kids."

Street children are simply poor children in the wrong place. The spatial metaphor appears, again, in the label "marginals" (*marginais*), often attached to older street youths as well as to criminalized adults. In part, street kids' "marginality" is derived from their living on the edges and margins of society, and above all from their violating the neat social and moral categories that separate "home" from "street." Mary Douglas's definition (1970) of "dirt" as perfectly ordinary soil that is out of place comes to mind in this regard. Soil in the ground is clean, a potential garden; soil under the fingernails is dirt, a potential contaminant. Similarly, a poor, ragged child running unsupervised along an unpaved road in a *favela* or playing in a field of sugarcane is just a "kid," an unmarked *menino* or *menina*. That same child transposed to the main streets and plazas of town, however, can be seen as a threat or a social problem: a potentially dangerous (or potentially neglected) *menino de rua*, a "street kid."

Modern city streets are not for the poor, barefoot, "backward," semilit-erate, and semiskilled *matuto* (country bumpkin), and they are certainly not for poor stray children. The term "street child" reflects the preoccu-pations of one class and segment of Brazilian society with the proper place of another. The term represents a kind of symbolic apartheid. Urban space has become increasingly privatized, inverting an earlier, late-nineteenth-century conception of the city as providing an open and heterogeneous public space. Today one notes two tendencies in urban areas: an abandon-ment of city streets by the urban elite, who increasingly live their lives in gated communities (Caldeira 1992); and attempts to privatize beaches and certain urban neighborhoods, which come to be seen as the privileged reserve of middle-class people, people of "substance" and "quality."

As long as they are contained to the slum, favela, or rural villa, poor children on the loose may be numerous, but they are invisible to the afflu-ent city center. As long as they remain in the periphery, loose children are not viewed as an urgent social problem about which something *must* be done. But from the point of view of the favela, there is nothing extraordi-nary or problematic about its children flowing over into the main streets of the town. The street, especially the city center, is a primary site of em-ployment and economic survival. And so there is nothing problematic for them about a child *in* the street. The "dangerous" street kid, *menino de rua*, of one discursive space (middle-class Brazil) is simply a *menino*, just an ordinary kid, in the discursive space of the favela.

Under ordinary conditions, poor children spend a greater part of the day (and sometimes night) in the street than affluent children do. Favela

homes are overcrowded, families are unstable, and mother's current boy-friend may make demands for privacy that preclude older boys sleeping at home. Consequently, "home," especially for male favela kids, is not so much a place to eat and sleep as an emotional space, the place where one comes from and to which one returns, at least periodically. One "checks in" with home, so to speak. In psychological terms, home for many of these kids is an important "transitional object" (like a pacifier on a string) and not a permanent and dependable form of security.

If the term "street child" is not used in the favela, shantytown parents do sometimes speak critically of local boys and young men, *malandros*, who "spend their lives doing bad things in the street." And the expression "going to the streets" is used to refer to all kinds of antisocial and disor-derly behavior, from glue sniffing and drug use to prostitution, without necessarily implying that the youths involved "belong" to the streets, as the term "street child" sometimes implies. Perhaps the closest that *favelados* come to thinking of a "street child" is the oft-expressed fear of "losing a child to the streets," to the uncontrolled realm beyond the home. Here, reference to the streets is used to describe a child's declaration of indepen-dence from his or her parents. Bui, of the Alto do Cruzeiro, for example (Scheper-Hughes 1992:469), spoke of losing a teenage daughter to "the streets" of Recife during a time when Bui, abandoned by her second hus-band, was unable to provide for the basic needs of her several children. But, even so, she would never refer to her rebellious daughter as a "street child."

This issue of terms points to an important gender distinction. The al-ternation between home and the street is more vexed and problematic for favela girls than for boys. The same home conditions that propel their brothers into the street affect them as well, but a girl must always declare a fixed assignment and a fixed destination in the street, whether she is to be gone from home for a few hours or for a few days. The surveillance of daughters is a perennial anxiety of favela women who themselves must often be out of the home working *na rua* (in the street, but here simply meaning downtown) for much of the day.

From the age of seven or eight years, favela girls are assigned child tend-ing and other domestic tasks that keep them close to home. But sometimes a mother requires that her daughter go to the "rua" to fetch clothing to be washed, to buy medications, to carry a message to an employer. Favela girls who are particularly clever (*sabida*) and savvy, as well as literate or very nearly so, are extremely useful to their mothers in mediating the house-hold's dealings with the "somebodies" of the street, the "fine people" of "big houses": from plantation estate and factory owners to small shop-keepers, coffin makers, clinic doctors, patrons, political leaders, clergy, and

nuns. And so, many favela girls do end up spending more and more time "working" and negotiating the street—where, however, they run the risk of being recruited into deviant activities, including prostitution.

MENINOS DE CASA—HOME CHILDREN?

The real issue is the preoccupation of one segment of Brazilian society (the middle class) with the "proper place" of another and poorer class of children. The unarticulated contrasting partner of the *menino de rua* must be, to coin a new term, the *menino de casa*, the "home child." But just what is a "home child"? In modern Brazil, "street" and "home" are symbolically loaded terms that concern social class as much as location. "Home children," then, are simply properly middle-classed children, kids who are claimed and named by families associated with "good" homes. Such children, especially young boys and adolescents of both sexes, may also spend a great deal of time in the streets, in public malls, on beaches, and in new shopping centers. But by their dress, manners, and comportment, they are immediately recognizable as "proper" children, *meninos de casa*, children of "substance" and "quality." They are neither "dangerous" nor endangered. And they are usually "white." The hidden and disallowed part of the discourse on Brazil's street children is that the term is, in fact, color coded in "race-blind" Brazil, where most street kids are "black."⁴

We are alluding to the discursive aspects of the micropolitics of class and power relations in Brazil. As Roberto DaMatta (1987:115) has so eloquently demonstrated, *casa* and *rua* are Brazilian "keywords" that refer to more than spatial and social spaces. The terms are moral entities, spheres of social action, and ethical provinces. *Casa* (as in the feudal *casas grandes* of old) is the realm of relational ties and privilege that confer social personhood, human rights, and full citizenship. *Rua*, in contrast, is an unbounded, impersonal, and dangerous realm, the space of the other, the masses (*o povo*), where one can be treated as a mere individual, a non-person, that is, as anonymous. Rights (here, meaning entitlements and privilege) are appropriate in the realm of the semi-feudal, kin-based "home." Rights derive from one's extended network of personal and familial relationships. In the space of the home, writes DaMatta, one is not only a social person but a "supercitizen" (23).

Street children, typically barefoot, shirtless, and seemingly unattached to a home, represent the extreme of social marginality and anonymity. They occupy a particularly degraded social position within the Brazilian hierarchy of place and power. As denizens of the street, poor and semiautonomous kids are separated from all that can confer relationship and propriety, without which (in this moral system) rights and citizenship are impossible. Street kids, also commonly referred to by the stigmatizing terms *pivete*

(young thief), *trombadinha* (pickpocket, purse snatcher), *maloquero* (street child, thief), *menor* (delinquent), and *marginal* (criminal), are beyond the pale of normative Brazilian society. DaMatta (1991:67) writes that "expressions [such as] *je para a rua*—to dump someone or something into the street—are very strong and offensive." Throwing a person out of the house is synonymous with depriving him or her of any social position (see also Graça's story in Goldstein, next chapter). In this context, leaving home is a kind of punishment or penalty. Moreover, as urban centers have become increasingly associated with violent crime, drugs, and new epidemics, and as excess youth have been forced in ever greater numbers onto the streets, the association between street children and violence has grown stronger in the Brazilian social imagination.

The primary transgression of the street child is that of place, and within the same space of the Brazilian city move two childhoods, two distant worlds. Rich children are accorded enormous freedoms of movement and expression. They are allowed to take liberties with adults who are beneath them in class and status. The old irony is, of course, the physical dependency of the rich and their children, whose immediate needs and desires are serviced by the poor who work in their homes, kitchens, and gardens. But beyond the private spaces of their homes, the two classes of children may not mingle. In contrast to the large personal freedoms guaranteed the children of the "big houses" (Calligaris 1991),⁵ poor children find their mobility circumscribed. Alone on the streets, they can be shot dead as young bandits. It is not uncommon, therefore, for street children to carry weapons of self-defense. Thus, the cost of maintaining this form of apartheid is high: an urban public sphere that is unsafe for any child.

STREET LIFE

The street offers both opportunity and danger, and there are many different ways to be a child of the streets. Most street children work, selling candy or popsicles, guarding and washing cars, carrying groceries and other parcels, or shining shoes (Swift 1991; Rizzini et al. 1992; Junior and Drska 1992). Most return home at night to sleep, while a minority alternate sleeping outdoors with sleeping at home. An even smaller group of street children live full-time in the streets, rarely going home to visit or share resources. Although they represent the smallest number of those who are labeled "street kids," these truly homeless children are quite visible; and because of what they must do to defend themselves on the streets, they fuel the negative stereotypes of the "dangerous" and "uncontrollable" street kids.

Those children who actually live and sleep in the streets are commonly associated with theft, gang life, and drugs, and they are much more likely

to be the targets and victims of violence, exploitation, police brutality, and death squads. While most children and adolescents living in the street are boys (Swift 1991; Rizzini et al. 1992), young girls also can be forced there, often following escape from exploitative work as domestic servants or as child prostitutes in cabarets (Vasconcelos 1991; Dimenstein 1991). For some girls, however, the reverse is true: that is, they may seek out prostitution because it provides them with a "safe house," away from the anarchy of the streets. The plight of these girls has only recently begun to receive recognition and attention.

Kids who merely work in the streets often seek to distinguish themselves from those who must *live* in the streets. Thus, the outward signs that a child is working—the shoeshine box, the tray of candy, the pail of roasted nuts—are also symbols that the child is "good" and should not be perceived as a threat. The empty-handed street kid traveling in a group and obviously not working is far more likely to suffer discrimination. Teresa Caldeira (1992) has noted a similar phenomenon among adult men, many of them recent arrivals from impoverished rural northeastern Brazil, in neighborhoods of São Paulo. These men, who by their appearance (poor, shabbily dressed, often of mixed race) are routinely discriminated against and suspected of being criminals, are quick to demonstrate the signs that they are workers and are not bad people. Although presently unemployed, they may readily offer to show their *canteira profissional*, the worker's identity card. They may carry around the *marmita*, the lunch container workers bring to the work site each day, and they may point to the calluses on their hands "as proof of manual labor" (178). In both cases (those of marginal adults and street kids), the individual's right to occupy public space is conditional, and the person is stigmatized by the visible signs of poverty and need that are seen as markers of criminality. Poor adults and street children suffer from a constant overprediction of dangerousness and have been judged guilty of harboring "criminal needs." Except for the constant display of their availability for cheap labor, their presence in public makes them vulnerable to suspicion and brutal forms of control.

ATTACHMENTS TO HOME AND MOTHER

Most street children are simply "excess" kids: the children of poor, often single or abandoned women (Rizzini et al. 1992). While they may be almost autonomous, they often remain emotionally dependent on home and deeply attached to the idea of "family." When we asked nine-year-old "Chico," a street kid of Bom Jesus da Mata, if his mother still loved him, he replied without hesitation, "She's my mother, she *has* to love me!" But Chico knew as well as we did that his mother had forced him out of the house after trying to give him away as a baby several times to distant rela-

tives. Street kids in Bom Jesus da Mata—especially boys—tend to be sentimental about mothers, their own in particular. When asked why they beg, steal, or live in the streets, poor children often replied that they were doing it to help their mothers. Most share a percentage of their street earnings with their mothers, to whom some return each evening. "Fifty-Fifty," said Giomar proudly, with his raspy, boy-man voice. "Oh, *che!*" his nine-year-old friend, Aldimar, corrected him. "Since when did you ever give your mother more than a third?"

A band of street children who had attached themselves to Schepher-Hughes's household in Bom Jesus in 1987 liked nothing better than to be invited indoors to use her flush toilet, to wash with soap and hot water, and, afterwards, to flop on the cool floor and draw with Magic Marker pens. The kids' sketches were curious. Most drew self-portraits or conventional, intact nuclear family scenes, even when there was no "Papa" living in the (former) house or when the child himself had long since left home for the streets. The small subgroup of truly homeless street children also favored religious themes—the crucifixion in particular, colored in with lots of bright red wounds. Cemeteries and violent death were also common subjects of their drawing. Despite such gruesome scenes, their own self-portraits were often surprisingly smiling and upbeat, testifying to the resiliency of these street-smart survivors.

BEGGING AND STEALING

<i>Por esse pão pra comer</i>	For this bread to eat
<i>Por esse chão pra dormir</i>	For this ground on which to sleep
<i>Por me deixar respirar</i>	For letting me breathe
<i>Por me deixar existir</i>	For letting me exist
<i>Deus lhe pague!</i>	God reward you!

—Chico Buarque

Justifying the persecution of street kids in Brazil today are rumors, radio reports, and unsubstantiated news stories about roving gangs of favela children, some of whom are said to stream across the southern beaches of Rio de Janeiro robbing anyone within reach. This latter rumor was based on a single incident later attributed to youths from a particular favela, none of whom were homeless. The Brazilian newsweekly *Voz* reported that in the central plaza of São Paulo, the Praça da Sé, street children commit over thirty-two thousand thefts and robberies a year, each child allegedly committing three thefts a day (Filho, Azevedo, and Pinto 1991). The sources of these alarming statistics are vague. Nonetheless, the stories cause considerable panic in middle- and working-class people, who are fearful of new "invasions" by the desperately poor into their social spaces.

Padre Secchi, a Salesian missionary who has been working with the poor

and street children for close to thirty years in the Amazonian city of Belém, remarked to us that what is striking is not how many poor children are criminals but how *few* resort to crime, considering their miserable life conditions. And indeed, it *is* striking to see in any Brazilian city the lines of poor children and adolescents standing guard over small trays of goods—candy, cheap soap and perfumes, watches, or hardware—hoping to sell a few small items, perhaps amounting, if they are lucky, to a couple of dollars each day. While the earnings are negligible, there is often a strong resolve among many poor youth *not* to be criminal and instead to counteract the distrust with which they are confronted each day (MNMMR et al. 1991: 45).

Of course, some—especially older—street children survive, at least in part, through petty crime. Almost all of the street children we interviewed in 1992 at a shelter in Bom Jesus said that they stole things or that they “used to steal” before mending their ways. But stealing, they argued, was merely *um jeito*, a necessary way of surviving, not something they were proud of. In response to a small battery of projective tests (the Thematic Apperception Test, Draw-a-Person, and various sentence-completion tasks) Schep-Hughes administered in 1989 to a dozen former street children of Bom Jesus, who were then attending a local “reform school” (FEBEM), a strongly articulated moral ethos *against* stealing was a pervasive theme. For example, Schep-Hughes presented the street children with a modified version of Kohlberg’s famous moral dilemma number one, the so-called Heinz story: “Severino had a wife he loved very much who suddenly got very sick. She needed a new powerful medicine which was very expensive, and only Feliciano’s drug store had this medicine. If she did not get the drug, she would die. But Severino was very poor; he had lost his job at the sugar mill, and he didn’t have enough money to buy the medicine. What do you think? Should Severino steal the drug?” Not a single former street child (ranging in age from eight to fifteen) believed that Severino should steal the drug. They suggested that he might try to raise the money in other ways. Here were a few of their answers:

Edivaldo [age 13]: No, no, he wouldn’t rob, not at all. He would arrange to buy the drug on time payments, or he would ask his brothers and sisters to help him.

Adeniano [age 15]: The man has to try to beg [*pedir*] first for the [money]. He’ll get it, too, because people will know him and they will believe his story. And so his wife won’t die.

Josuel [age 12]: He will just have to go place-to-place-looking for work. It is better to work than to steal.

Schep-Hughes: Yes, I agree. But what if he can’t find work and his wife is getting weaker and weaker?

Josuel: Then he will have to beg from people, or he can take up a collection, starting with the mayor.

And in the Draw-a-Person scenario, the FEBEM youth produced dozens of idealized pictures of polite street children begging, often carrying heavy sacks bulging with imagined booty. Those who could write would often draw a bubble with the words, “Thank you, *senhora*” or “God bless you, godfather”—or the ubiquitous “God will repay you!”

Of course, we are aware that street kids are, almost by definition, street-smart and know how to manipulate and adapt themselves to particular situations, including talking to anthropologists. We encountered many a former street child, for example, willing to tell us how much he or she “liked” the FEBEM school or an alternative shelter, only to escape the following day. Once “safely” back on the streets, the child would describe the same institution as a veritable chamber of horrors, in this way defending his or her decision to flee.

In northeastern Brazil, where a strong ethic of patron-client relationships still substitutes for the formal protections of minimum wage and workers’ rights, marginalized poor people accept begging as a “moral right” (Scheper-Hughes 1992: chap. 2). One young mother, forced to beg in the open-air marketplace of Bom Jesus, put it directly: “Shame is for those who steal, not for those who must beg to feed their children.” Indeed, the first family chore often assigned to the children of the poorest families of the favela is begging. This may take the form of special “petitions” to one or more local benefactors (often former casual employers) to whom the parent or the child can claim a special relationship. At other times, the begging is more general, with children requesting assistance at the gates of the local Franciscan convent, from the owners of local pharmacies, or from the patrons of open-air cafes and restaurants.

Begging is an identifying criterion of the street child. In one incident, a younger child was continually pushed away from Hoffman, who was interviewing former street children at a local shelter in Bom Jesus. The smaller child was being edged out by older and more “expert” adolescents who dismissed the child as a pest and not a “real” street kid like themselves. The little boy vehemently protested in his own defense, “*Mais eu peido, eu peido!*” (But I begged, I begged!). In fact, the child was known to have been more or less “adopted” by a local grocer and therefore less “independent” than the typical street kid.

As soon as “cute” street children begin to show signs of physical maturity, they are chased away from public spaces and rarely elicit compassion or a handout. There is a gradual and perhaps inevitable evolution from begging to stealing, and stealing is generally the second phase in the moral career of a street child. Seventeen-year-old “Antonio,” having spent nine

years living on the street, said that as long as he was "little and cute" he could make his way by begging, but after he turned about fourteen years old people suddenly became afraid of him and chased him away. "Should people be afraid of you?" Hoffman asked Antonio. "Yes," he replied with a grin, "because of their wallets!" Scheper-Hughes asked a small *narma* (group of age mates) of younger street boys in 1989 if they knew what middle-class people in Bom Jesus said about children who lived in the streets begging. The boys nodded their heads, and nine-year-old Josenildo said gravely, "They say we will turn into thieves." But no sooner had he said this than another of the boys, eleven-year-old Marcelo, broke in with a disclaimer: "Thanks be to God that up until now I have never stolen anything, and I never want to either!" "And why not?" asked Scheper-Hughes. "I don't want to end up in jail," he replied.

Ten-year-old Adevaldo (nicknamed "Deo"), the quietest and most reflective of this little street "family" added, "Yes, it is true. We do become thieves. But I, myself, am going to be different. I am going to return to school until I am graduated and then I will find a good job. I am going to have a wife and children, and I will never put any of them out in the streets to beg."

Scheper-Hughes: And where do you hope to find a job, Deo?

Deo [proudly]: I want to work in the Bank of Brazil [laughter and hoots all around]

Scheper-Hughes: Do you think they will trust you in a bank, Deo? Won't they say, "Oh, I remember that one—he used to beg outside the Santa Teresinha bakery"?

Deo: But I am going to quit soon, and no one will remember me. I am already looking for a job, but the woman who said she would hire me has changed her mind. And now I only beg because I am hungry.

Scheper-Hughes: When you go home isn't there food for you?

Deo: My mother only cooks for my father, not for me.

Scheper-Hughes: Doesn't your mother care for you?

Deo [after a slight hesitation]: She likes a part of me.

Scheper-Hughes: Which part?

Deo: That I sometimes bring home things for her that I get in the street.

Scheper-Hughes: You mean that you steal?

Deo: Yes, sometimes. But I don't like doing these things and I want to reform.

Among older street children and adolescents, especially those who have spent time in juvenile detention or reform schools, begging is seen as humiliating, while stealing is valued. As Maria Lucia Violante (1983:159) observed, "The expertise that [street kids] have to develop in order to rob and not be caught, becoming '*malandros*' [law breakers], is a greater value,

one which confers status in the group." Although the street child "doesn't think it is right to steal, nor does he think it is fair not to have anything, just as he doesn't think it is right that the governor, rich people, and the police steal and aren't punished" (179). The Brazilian police are viewed as particularly corrupt and involved in crime, including their routinely appropriating stolen merchandise from street children (Caldeira 1992; Teixeira 1991; Dimenstein 1991).

Stealing and getting away with it momentarily invert the social hierarchy, putting street children on top and in control, transforming them for the moment into "somebodies," people to take seriously. So, stealing can even be a badge of (especially male) honor. There is a common expression in Brazil for robbing someone—*fazer festa*, "to make a party," here obviously at someone else's expense. The *malandro* is a "bad boy" and a trickster; among his peers (and in the favela generally) he is valued for his survival skills.

SHOES AND GLUE: THE ECONOMY OF ADDICTION

The economy of Bom Jesus da Mata is based on three commodities: sugar, cotton textiles, and shoes. Today two large shoe factories and a dozen smaller cottage industries, producing about four thousand pairs of shoes a day, provide employment to several hundred people, many of them young boys and girls in their early teens and younger, despite stringent child labor laws. Scheper-Hughes visited several local shoe factories in Bom Jesus where she interviewed managers and shop bosses who denied that the small children employed on the floor were underage. They only *looked* young, she was told, because favela youth were undernourished and stunted. The children were employed at tables where some cut leather soles and others slathered intoxicating glue on the leather. In Bom Jesus the strong subculture of glue sniffing has its origins in the local industry. While young factory workers often complain of nausea, headaches, nervousness, and dizziness from daily exposure to the toxic fumes of treated leather and glue, local street children prize the strong smell of glue, and in their crowd, glue sniffing is a primary badge of street identity.

Among older children in Bom Jesus, glue sniffing in public could be seen as an aggressive act, displaying their disregard for authority and social norms. Among the younger street children Scheper-Hughes interviewed, glue sniffing—along with sniffing other chemicals, from perfume to gasoline to shoe polish—seemed more closely linked to self-soothing and displaced attachment. Glue, they explained, was pleasant (*bom*) and nice-smelling (*cheiroso*). Some said that it helped them to sleep, especially when hungry. It was "relaxing." Pedro (age twelve), a student at FEBEM in 1989, described himself as "nervous and emotional." Glue sniffing, he said, made

him more calm. It was not uncommon to see a street child, after he or she had been chased away or reprimanded by an adult authority figure, retreat to a curbstone and duck his head inside a shirt to sniff glue from a bottle or a rag hidden under his arm. For some small street children, sniffing glue was used interchangeably with thumb or pacifier sucking, a practice that street children (as well as other favela children, see book cover and Goldstein, next chapter) sometimes engage in as late as adolescence. In marked contrast, the older street kids that Hoffman interviewed, who were former glue sniffers and now occasional or habitual *maconha* (marijuana) users, noted the adverse side effects of glue sniffing—nervousness, dizziness, and giddiness. Overall, they said, glue sniffing made one “crazy in the head,” *lele*.

Nonetheless, the Brazilian media, which tends to portray glue-sniffing street children as dangerously “intoxicated,” “brain-damaged,” and “addicted,” has exaggerated the toxicity of the glue and its effects. A story in *Veja* (Filho, Azevedo, and Pinto 1991) referred to common shoemaker’s glue as a “powerful and toxic hallucinogen,” although there is no medical evidence to support this assertion. And most news reports have failed to recognize the ritualized aspects of glue sniffing among street children and its association with other regressive, infantile satisfactions, like thumb sucking. Focusing on the criminally “addicted” street child is a convenient way to avoid confronting the more fundamental social and economic problems affecting the families and communities of the poor.

THE PATH TO THE STREET

Most children who take up residence in the streets for a time do not so much run away or choose the streets as they are thrown out of, or driven from, homes in which exposure to chronic hunger, neglect, and physical or sexual abuse make life under bridges, in bus stations, and in public rest rooms seem preferable, or even—as one child living in an abandoned building in Bom Jesus put it—more “peaceful” and “happy” than life at home. During fieldwork in 1992, Valdimar, a nutritionally stunted eleven-year-old street kid from Bom Jesus da Mata, told us a gripping story about his path to the streets:

I am small, *Tia*, but I already know a few things. My mother said I was so small that I could hardly be born at all. But here I am. Before I ran away from home, I suffered a lot. My mother turned our house into a cabaret doing those sex things they do in the *telenovelas* [television soap operas]. It made me hate all women. That is why I am the way I am today. You could say, a homosexual.

As the eldest I was left alone in charge of everything. You could say that I was the *dona da casa* [the woman of the house]. I was like a mother. I did the

shopping, the cleaning, the cooking. The little ones were always hungry and sick. I had to go out begging milk for the babies. And that miserable bum [*sefado*] of a father would just leave me with potatoes to cook. In the end, all but three of them died. Whenever one of them was sick, I wrapped them up and took them to the clinic. I gave them their medicines. And whenever any of them died, it was left up to me to go to the mayor and get a free [pauper’s] coffin. And it was me who washed them, dressed them, and “arranged” them in their boxes. . . . [E]ven the flowers I arranged. Everything, I did everything! I only didn’t die myself because I was the oldest and I was lucky. Finally, I decided to run away.

In the streets it was better for a while. I smelled glue and I robbed. When I pulled a knife on a rich man’s son to get his watch, the police grabbed me and brought me to jail. In jail it was bad, miserable. The other boys called me names like “fag” and “queer” [*freca, bicha, viado*], and a bunch of the bigger ones stuffed my mouth [with rags], and they raped me. I screamed. But the police didn’t do anything; they just laughed. I went before the judge, and I made my case. He took me out of jail and put me here [a church-run shelter for street kids]. I never want to go back to jail, so I think that I will just stay here for now.

“So what do you think of the world now?” we asked. “I think it stinks,” he said. “Is there anything good about it?” “Nothing. It’s only fit for thieves. The world is nothing.”

Exchanging sex for food and affection is a survival strategy for some street children, especially those like Valdimar who were initiated into sex at an early age. And for young girls, escaping from the slavery of domestic service—especially in semirural areas like Bom Jesus—in which the right to prey on a young servant girl’s body is still considered the privilege of the master of the house and of his sons, can make prostitution seem like liberation. “The first time I sold my body was the first time I felt like it really belonged to me,” confided a teenage runaway from rural Pernambuco to her peers at a meeting for young sex workers in São Paulo (organized by an AIDS awareness group) that Scheper-Hughes attended. The girl’s family history included long-standing incest.

SCHOOLS THAT DEFORM

During the military years, the state’s primary mechanism to correct and control loose and “wayward” children was FEBEM, the network of state institutions for the “well-being” of minors. In practice, these agencies were often jail-like institutions for incarcerating and criminalizing children. The film *Pixote* (1981), mentioned earlier in this chapter, fictionally recreated violent scenes from the lives of children who, like Pixote himself, were “inmates” at a FEBEM facility. Prior to democratization, which brought many reforms to the juvenile justice system in Brazil, a street kid could be

apprehended and detained indefinitely at a FEBEM institution. "Vagrancy" or a "suspicious attitude" were sufficient grounds for commitment. As late as 1987, there were almost seven hundred thousand Brazilian children and adolescents in FEBEM institutions and related punitive reform schools (Swift 1991).

But even after the passage of new laws, such as the Child and Adolescent Statute of 1990, real change has been slow. On 22 October 1992, a twenty-four hour rebellion broke out in a FEBEM facility in São Paulo, which at the time held more than 1200 children as virtual prisoners. In the midst of the rebellion, 1 young inmate died, 40 were wounded, and 500 youths managed to escape. The 350 youths who were recaptured were savagely beaten on their return to the FEBEM facility, where they were reportedly caged up like animals. Other youths in the facility were locked in small, crowded cells lacking ventilation and bathrooms. The director of the São Paulo FEBEM facility told a reporter that the children were kept naked in the buildings "for reasons of security" (AGEN 1992). *Folha de São Paulo*, 18 November 1992, reported another instance of FEBEM youth caged in a small, 60-inmate facility in Brasília. Health professionals estimated that at least half of the children were infected with HIV; two were showing signs of AIDS.

Obviously, the state institutions exist to "reform" the delinquent child, but toward what? In her study of interned youth in FEBEM facilities, Violante (1983:61) concluded that detention only confirmed the child's status as a "marginal." FEBEM teachers led children to believe that their anti-social behavior and psychological problems were the *causes* rather than the results of their tremendous life difficulties. With tenuous ties to a family or home and with few prospects for the future, FEBEM kids suspect that the real purpose of the institution is to shut them away and out of sight. And after their release, FEBEM graduates usually return to the streets to beg, commit small crimes, or prostitute themselves. During their detention, they acquire neither the skills nor the adult sponsors that could help them make a positive transition into a society in which they have always been outcasts (Altoé 1991:28).

In Bom Jesus, a large, rambling state reform school (now called FUNDAC, the Foundation to Assist Children) is perched on a hill overlooking the municipal graveyard. In 1990 it replaced the FEBEM institution that was previously located there. Nonetheless, both institutions were and still are schools for the reproduction of a subservient underclass. In 1987 Dona Edite, the director of the original FEBEM facility, described the institution to Scheper-Hughes as a vocational school whose aim was to "professionalize" poor children by preparing them for useful trades in the municipality of Bom Jesus. The school offered two hundred children between the ages of eight and fifteen a choice of four "professional pathways": weaving

(primarily cheap hammocks); gardening and cultivation (with hoe and machete); sewing and embroidery; and cooking and domestic skills.

Hygiene and proper comportment were taught as "major subjects" in the hope that improved personal appearance and polite (i.e., properly "subservient") behavior might make these "rebellious" street children more acceptable to future employers. In 1992 an educational "reform" at FUNDAC instituted broom making as a fifth "professional pathway." And so a great many former street children passed the day at the local reform school tediously assembling brooms from twigs and straw, which sold for a few pennies at the local Saturday open-air market. The children were "learning to labor" (Willis 1977) at the most insipid and marginal tasks while their more affluent peers attended the local Franciscan academy in downtown Bom Jesus, where they received a classic education along with an introduction to computer science.

The director of the FUNDAC reform school and her assistants developed contacts with the owners of various "industries" in Bom Jesus—mainly shoe and hammock factories—and they offered their "best" students as unpaid apprentices. Decorating the walls of the reform school were pious slogans, such as "All work is honorable" and "Idleness is the devil's workshop." The director explained that the school's "philosophy of education" derived from the great progressive educator from Northeast Brazil, Paulo Freire (1970, 1973), and she referred to the work of the FEBEM/FUNDAC school as one of *conscientização* (critical consciousness raising). "What does that mean to you?" Scheper-Hughes asked. "Social upliftment" for the poor was Dona Edite's reply. When Scheper-Hughes protested that this was a distortion of Freire's pedagogy, the director replied, "Well, of course, this is our *adaptation* of Paulo Freire; it is not *pure* Freire."

The poor children of Bom Jesus and their parents were not easily fooled by the ruse and rhetoric of FEBEM. "Black Irene," of the shantytown Alto do Cruzeiro, mocked the "enlightened philosophy" of the local institution. "To me," she said, "a profession is like a lawyer or a doctor, not a seamstress, a weaver, or a plantation worker. What kind of liberation is it that would make children sit still all day long picking at threads to make a fine tablecloth or pushing a loom to make a hammock?" To shantytown parents, FEBEM was just another kind of juvenile detention, one they commonly used as a threat with their own rebellious children: "If you don't behave, I'll turn you out into the streets and let the FEBEM police lock you up!"

Consequently, street children's fears of FEBEM were extreme. "You won't turn me in to FEBEM will you?" Scheper-Hughes was pressed to answer many times. "They kill children there," young Luiz insisted. The more we denied that this could be so, the more the children ticked off the names of friends who had been beaten and worse at one of the FEBEM

reform schools in Pernambuco. "Why do you think that they built FEBEM so close to the cemetery of Bom Jesus?" asked José Roberto anxiously. No one can tell these experienced street children that their fears for their physical safety are groundless.

In recent years, graffiti appeared on the walls of the Bank of Brazil in downtown Bom Jesus and on many public buildings in Recife. One slogan stated, "FEBEM Kills Street Children" and was accompanied by a stick drawing of a bleeding child outside a marked FEBEM building. Another declared, "FEBEM is not a School, it is a Prison." This was accompanied by two contrasting murals: one of a school with students reading, which was crossed out; and the other of a FEBEM building with bars across the windows, sad faces peeking out, and a guard with a rifle poised outside. Another mural announced the fears many poor Brazilians entertained about FEBEM's functioning covertly as an international adoption agency. The wall sketch portrayed a group of wealthy tourists, each with a camera in one hand and a fistful of dollar bills in another. The legend read: "Rich Tourists Come with Lots of Dollars and Another FEBEM Kid Disappears." The graffiti was the work of a grassroots movement organized to protect the rights of street children against official and covert abuses. FEBEM "reform" schools were one of their primary targets.

Their seemingly exaggerated fears were not unfounded. Indeed, officials at some FEBEM institutions did nominate certain "abandoned" children to adoption agencies. Even as late as 1992, following much acrimonious debate in Brazil about the status of international adoption (Scheper-Hughes 1990, 1992), the state appointed "children's judge" in Bom Jesus said that he himself was not opposed to the international adoption of Brazil's unwanted minors as long as the children in question were truly "abandoned" by their families and no Brazilian adoptive parents had come forward. The judge even offered to serve as an "intermediary" should we know of any interested North American adoptive families. (In the years between 1992 and 1996 there were over twenty petitions considered for international adoption in Bom Jesus. Due to public accusations of an active "baby trade," in which the children's judge was implicated, he was removed from office.)

Members of the local children's guardianship counsel (see below) complained bitterly about how often they were asked by wealthy people in Bom Jesus to recommend a street child to them as a junior domestic. The wealthy matrons were very specific and would only consider a child who was clean, sweet smelling, free of head lice, obedient, not a glue sniffer, and not terribly clever. One child advocate told of a mill (*usina*) owner's wife who had come to FUNDAC that same year looking to "adopt" a little girl. She put the child to work immediately: cooking, washing, cleaning, and looking after the children of the household. Although barely eight years old, the

girl knew enough to refuse the woman's incessant demands, and when the woman tried to force the child to work, she ran away. The woman complained to the director of FUNDAC, explaining how well the child was being taken care of and fed. She commented ruefully, "This one you sent us was *muito sabida* [much too smart]." The child advocate told us, "Townspersons want us to clear the streets of indigent children and at the same time make these kids safe for a kind of indentured service. And when I confront them with this fact, they defend themselves, saying, 'Yes, but isn't it better that these children are put to some use working in a garden or washing clothes than doing nothing and getting into trouble?'"

REFORMS THAT BACKFIRE: KIDS IN JAIL

Almost anything would seem a better solution than the old system of state-run juvenile detention centers, and Brazilians of good conscience welcomed the new reforms mandated by the Child and Adolescent Statute. Among these was the official recognition (for the first time) that children—even "unsightly" and "obnoxious" street children—had rights to dignity, respect, and freedom. Children, the statute states, should be free from violence, oppression, exploitation, and discrimination.

These reforms first came to be felt in Bom Jesus da Mata in the early 1990s, and the municipality responded by appointing a community council for child rights and a smaller group of child guardians (*conselho tutelar*). But the changes were more symbolic than substantive. The local judge found the new laws difficult to apply in the local context. Although the law prohibits placing young "delinquents" in municipal jails alongside adult offenders, Bom Jesus had no alternative locked facilities in which to place juvenile offenders. FUNDAC was maintained as a daytime facility only, and the local church-run shelter for street kids was a voluntary institution. Older, rougher, and more "hardened" street kids rarely stayed for more than a day or two before scaling the walls of the shelter and slipping back into the streets.

Consequently, the small, dingy, totally inadequate municipal jail contained several underage youths locked up alongside adult offenders at the time of our fieldwork in 1992. And, though the new statute prohibits children from being interned in any correctional institution for more than forty-five days, the half-dozen boys we met in the municipal jail had been there for periods ranging from several weeks to six months, with no clear indication of just when they might be tried or released. (If there is no other facility to hold a juvenile offender, the new law does permit detaining youths in separate cells of municipal jails for a period not to exceed five days. The maximum period that a child can be interned following sentencing is three years.) But the social reality was such, the local judge ex-

plained, that these particular street children, locally perceived as in revolt against social and community mores, were both dangerous and endangered. They were at risk of retaliatory attacks by other street kids and by paid vigilantes. Without relatives to claim or protect them, in the absence of a formal network of foster homes, with the fate of the old FEBEM institutions uncertain and their mandate curtailed, jail seemed the only reasonable option.

In one cell of the local jail, we found "Caju" and "Junior," fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds whom Scheper-Hughes remembered as among the street urchins attached to her household in 1987. Caju was even elected to represent the street children of Bom Jesus at the first national convention of street children held in Brasilia in 1986, and his photo had appeared in a magazine story about that historic event, when street children from all over Brazil converged on the capital to voice their grievances and demand their human rights. Now, several years later, both boys were accused of assault and of raping another street child. Thus, were they transformed into precocious little men, jailed and held accountable for their chaotic street behavior.

ETHNIC CLEANSING: DEATH SQUADS AND THE MURDER OF STREET CHILDREN

Brazil's multitudes of urban street kids (even in small interior towns like Bom Jesus da Mata) live in daily fear of police, of FEBEM institutions, of child kidnappers, and of the more fantastically imagined child organ stealers (Scheper-Hughes 1990, 1996a and b). In the last decade, a new fear has been added, that of untimely death at the hands of paid death squads. In all, the lives of Brazilian street kids are characterized by a profound sense of ontological insecurity.

Beginning in the 1980s—well into Brazil's democratic transition—reports began to surface (especially in the human rights literature) of a deadly campaign against Brazil's street kids, who were subject to organized kidnapping, torture, and assassination at the hands of paid vigilantes and off-duty police, recruited in a project of "urban hygiene." The so-called death squads seemed to operate with relative impunity, especially in Brazil's large and hypermodern cities.

During the three-year period from 1988 through 1990, close to five thousand street children and adolescents were murdered in Brazil (reported in the *Jornal do Comercio*, 19 June 1991). The Office of Legal Advice to Popular Organizations (Gabinete de Assessoria Jurídica às Organizações Populares) (GAJOP 1991:1) noted that in recent years "there appears to be a deliberate intention of these groups [death squads] to summarily elim-

inate children and adolescents seen as suspected 'future delinquents.' " Few of these homicides were deemed worthy of official investigation. Poor and incomplete records are kept on the missing and assassinated bodies of the poor, leading one Brazilian writer to conclude, "We are left with a feeling that these children are 'nobody.' They are not even given the right to be registered when dead" (Nascimento 1990:39).

This lack of bureaucratic attention is not surprising when police officers are the suspected perpetrators of many of these crimes (Dimenstein 1991; MNMMR 1991). Most of the victims are adolescent males like Caju and Junior, between the ages of fifteen and nineteen (Nascimento 1990; MNMMR 1991), although younger children's lives have also been taken in the name of "street cleaning." The victims of these attacks tend to be poor and black, a reflection of the racial character of poverty in contemporary Brazil and the particular and selective disregard for the lives of black children. We are aware that this observation flies directly in the face of the Brazilian ideology of the nation's celebrated racial democracy. But it is just that persistent ideology that prevents ordinary Brazilians from seeing what is right before their eyes.

Late adolescence is a particularly dangerous time for the children of slum dwellers, and the age-at-death pyramid for Brazil is increasingly that of a country at war, with an overabundance of recorded male deaths between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four years, a noticeable deficit of young men, and an imbalanced sex ratio. After decades of declining death rates for young people in Brazil, the city of São Paulo experienced a rise in youth mortality beginning in 1970, and the city of Rio since 1980 (Vermelho and Mello 1996). There are an average of twenty violent deaths a day in Rio de Janeiro, making death from violence the third highest cause of mortality there (Zaluar 1994a). The primary victims of this undeclared, low-intensity civil war are young boys and black men from the hillside favelas. While we are not suggesting that all these deaths can be attributed to assassination, we do want to underscore the larger social context of violence that has turned Brazilian cities into a veritable (class) war zone.

In 1991 the Legal Medical Institute (the public morgue) in Recife received approximately fifteen bodies of dead children a month. Black and brown (mixed race) bodies outnumbered white bodies twelve to one, and boys outnumbered girls seven to one. In 80 percent of the cases, the bodies had been damaged or mutilated (Filho, Azevedo, and Pinto 1991:42). The public disposal of these tortured and mutilated bodies—the poorest of the poor, the denizens of the streets and favelas, the socially and racially marginalized—is meant to strike terror (and silent acquiescence) in that population in particular. The body counts on the police pages of the newspapers become normalized, quotidian, and ultimately a matter of little

concern or consequence. After all, it is reasoned, these bodies belonged to "marginals" who were probably complicit in their own deaths (MNMMR et al. 1991).

In his denunciation of violence against children in Brazil, Gilberto Dimenstein (1991) identified the role of off-duty policemen and hired killers working in concert with small businessmen and shop owners (*lojistas*) in sustaining the death squads. Typically, it is store owners who pay to have "undesirable" adolescents and children eliminated. Street kids are said to be bad for business, bad for tourism, and threats to public health and public safety. Death puts an end to the street child's annoying street "tactics" once and for all.

A report by the São Paulo chapter of the Brazilian Bar Association implicated the military police in death squads paid for by shopkeepers in the deaths of most of the nearly one thousand street children slain in that city in 1990 (Brooke 1992). A Brazilian nongovernmental agency characterized the routine assassinations of poor adolescents as an unofficial death penalty carried out "with chilling cruelty" (GAJOP 1991:3). Meanwhile, the German newsweekly *Der Spiegel* (1991) noted that while the public discussion of abortion is still taboo in Brazil, the murder of street children might be seen as "a type of abortion accepted by society, in which undesired children are killed after having been born." The analogy is rhetorical but not without merit. While this form of postpartum "abortion" has little to do with women's choice, it has everything to do with political choice and with public indifference to the survival of the children of the urban poor. Inherent in this logic is that the "right to life" is a conditional value, ultimately the privilege of affluent children.

Scheper-Hughes first became aware of the extent of the violence directed against young black men, the husbands and sons of the women of the Alto do Cruzeiro shantytown, when, around Christmastime in 1990, half a dozen young men—each in trouble with the law for petty theft, drunkenness, or vagrancy—were seized from their homes by unidentified men (some masked and "in uniform") and disappeared. Two of the missing showed up several days later, their dead bodies mutilated and dumped between rows of sugarcane. Masked men also came late one night for the teenage son of Black Irene, her favorite child, the boy everyone on the Alto knew affectionately as "Negó De." A local death squad with close ties to the police was suspected, but on this topic shantytown people were silent, speaking, if and when they did at all, in a rapid and complicated form of sign language. No one else wanted to be marked. But Black Irene's silence was more general. When she was shown the police photo of De's mangled body "for identification," the shock provoked a profound muteness in the stunned mother that lasted several weeks. Irene's muteness was at one and the same time a profound testimony to her "unspeakable" pain (Scarry

1985) and a dramatic materialization of Paulo Freire's metaphor of the "silence" of the oppressed people of Northeast Brazil.

Public silence on the part of usually outspoken political and local critics also accompanied these extraordinary events. The new "socialist" mayor of Bom Jesus said nothing. The sudden disappearances and murders of young black men and street children in the relatively small locale of Bom Jesus were not even thought worthy of a column in the radical "opposition" newspaper of Bom Jesus. When queried, the editor commented, "How could one distinguish a disappeared street kid from the multitude of ordinary runaways?" As for the kidnapping and murder of young black men of the shantytown by some form of vigilante justice, their deaths were simply written off. "Why should we criticize the execution of *malandros* [good-for-nothings] and scoundrels?" asked a progressive lawyer of Bom Jesus. "The police have to be free to go about their business," said Mariazinha, the disabled woman who lives in a small room behind the church and takes care of the altar flowers. "They know what they're doing. It's best to keep your mouth shut," she advised, pretending to zip her lips shut to show exactly what she meant. The young, new, "liberation theology" priest shook his head sadly: "Is it possible that they murdered Negó De? What a shame! He was in reform; I trusted him. He attended my weekly 'Young Criminals' Circle.'" The good priest added, "I guess it was just too late for Negó De."

And so each time a troublesome young street child was swept up in a police raid, was physically attacked, or disappeared, shantytown people said nothing, while others who were more supportive of these violent attacks on other people's children would occasionally murmur under their breath, "Good job, nice work!" or "One less!" (*menos um*). Most alarming of all, on her brief return to Bom Jesus in August 1997, Scheper-Hughes found that among the cohort of "hardened" street children she had been tracking since 1982, few had survived to early adulthood. Most were dead. Among those who were in jail, two had become members of local "extermination groups" dedicated to the Brazilian version of "ethnic cleansing"—the murder of black street children such as they were not so many years earlier.

DEMOCRACY AND VIOLENCE

How has this extraordinary consensus come about? And why has the period of reform and democratization in Brazil been accompanied, paradoxically, by an increase in public violence, especially death squad attacks on marginals? Above all, why are children the targets of off-duty police and civilian "cleanup" operations?

One could say that democratization itself has provoked a crisis. The

former military police state had kept the social classes safely apart and the "hordes" of disenfranchised, desperate, and "dangerous" poor children contained to the favelas and in long-term public detention. Suddenly, with the democratic transition and its accompanying neoliberal reforms, the shantytowns ruptured and poor black youths descended from hillside slums and seemed to be everywhere, flooding downtown boulevards and praças, flaunting their misery and their socially antagonistic needs. Complex emotions of fear, anger, and revulsion contributed to a public approval of their extermination.

Throughout the Brazilian military-dictatorship years (1964-1985), the civil and military police were heavily implicated in the disappearances, tortures, and deaths of suspected "subversives." Although the process of democratization has been rapid since 1982, it has yet to check the extraordinary power of the civil and military police over the minds and bodies of the poorer populations. Today the targets of assassination are ordinary thieves and minor criminals who, in the context of hypermodern Brazil, come to be seen as enemies of the state, even as enemies of democracy. The deaths and disappearances remain politically motivated, but it is the politics of class warfare and not of "Marxist subversion."

Therefore, in recent years the police have been called upon to enforce, often violently, the old and informal apartheidlike codes that have kept the poor and the black, young as well as old, "in their proper place." The irony is that the poor, just like the more affluent, tend to side with authoritarian police actions. Perhaps the most extreme example of this occurred in November 1994 when then President Itamar Franco and the state governor of Rio de Janeiro, Nilo Batista, sought military intervention, calling up almost twenty thousand troops in a bold and dramatic action to "gain control" of Rio's four hundred shantytowns in order to combat what both leaders called a state of "lawlessness" and drug-related violence in those areas. The commander of the troops, General Roberto Senna, led four hundred soldiers, backed by helicopters and tanks, into a shantytown to capture an arsenal of weapons.

Opinion polls collected by DataBrasil and published in Brazil's daily newspapers recorded strong popular support for the army and approval of the military occupation of Rio's shantytowns, including support from within the beleaguered shantytowns themselves. Yet perhaps this consent is not so remarkable; the very real violence and anarchy of the favela affects the favelados' lives most directly. Still, in a democracy, even in a fledgling one, there must be a strong rationale for the state to turn its military weapons and defense forces against its own civilians in shantytowns. What makes the people of the favelas assume the character of "threats" or "dangers" to the state so as to make violent attacks on them and their children an ac-

ceptable form of social control, the legitimate "business" of the police (as Mariazinha, mentioned above, saw it)?

Part of the answer lies in the fact that the "crimes" of the poor—the petty thievery of older "street kids" like Nego De, which helped maintain his mother and siblings following the murder of his own father—are viewed as "race" crimes and as "naturally" produced. Nego De and other poor, young, unemployed black youth are said to steal because it is "in their blood" to steal. They are described in crudely racist terms as *bichos da Africa* (beasts of Africa). Although their crimes are social ones—crimes of unmet needs created by the deteriorating terms of rural wage labor—their desperate acts are described as the "instinctual" crimes of an "inferior" and "debased" population. Increasingly today, race and race hatred have emerged as popular discursive justifications for violent and illegal police actions in shantytown communities and on the streets. Consequently, young black males in Brazil are increasingly a threatened population.

Meanwhile, the routinization of violence against the poor makes them expect their own violent deaths as predictable, almost natural. Street kids are overexposed to the premature experience of death, funerals, and disappearances. During our research in 1992, street kids in Bom Jesus were able to identify the names or nicknames of twenty-two friends and acquaintances who were murdered in recent years, some by peers, some by hired guns, others by death squads: Pedrinho, Zeze, Docideiro, Rede, Malaquia, Dede, Beto Boca de Veia, Joca, Misso, Bebe, Taiga, Ze Pequeno, Pipio, Regi, Geronimo, Xunda, Gilvam, Bodinha, Bui, Nino, Biopiolo, and Fro.

As one of Brazil's leading urban sociologists (Zaluar 1994a; 1994b) has observed, democratization took place in Brazil in the presence of three problematic features: chaotic urbanization, the AIDS epidemic, and the entry into Brazilian favelas of the Colombian drug cartels. By the mid-1980s, the geographical limits of most large cities, particularly São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, were reached. Consequently, the expanding population of the poor, many of them still newly arriving migrants from rural areas, especially from the northeast, were forced back into central districts of the cities where they were especially feared and unwanted. The AIDS epidemic created a moral panic about contamination from contact with the "bad blood" of social marginals (Scheper-Hughes 1994). Together, these contributed to a hostile impulse toward the people of the favelas. Simultaneously, political liberalization provided new legal protections for the poor, homosexuals, and people with diseases and disabilities. This meant that it is more difficult to remove or incarcerate "unwanted" populations legally; the job now has to be done covertly with the help of urban vigilantes.

The 1980s were also the years when the Colombian cartels and the Italian Mafia, trafficking in cocaine, entered Brazil, distributing upscale fire-

arms to poor youths from the favelas and even to street children who were recruited as messengers (*avioês*) for the big-time drug dealers. The expansion and reorganization of crime in the shantytowns of Brazil interrupted and confounded the growth of participatory democracy that so many grassroots organizations—residents' associations, trade unions, and ecclesiastical base communities—had long struggled to introduce.

As a result, a new culture of fear permeates daily life in urban Brazil today. Ordinary people are afraid to walk city streets, to go to the beach, to drive a car. Talk about crime dominates casual conversations, replacing talk about the economy, sports, politics, sex, and even Carnival (Caldeira 1992). There is a feeling that violent crime is increasing while the police and the courts not only fail to provide security and justice but also are corrupt and lawless themselves. Private technologies of personal security have proliferated in the form of security guards and vigilante operations. High-tech surveillance machines are installed in homes and office buildings. Residents' associations have closed off entire streets, even to pedestrians. Although it has many surreal qualities, the culture of fear in urban Brazil is more than just the product of wild imaginations. Urban violence is real enough.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR CITIZENSHIP

The backlash against street children derives, moreover, from a general suspicion about the new and imported discourses on "human rights" and "civil rights," which are seen as pretexts for granting favors to common criminals. As many social analysts before us have observed (most notably DaMatta 1992; Caldeira 1992; Zaluar 1995), Brazil lacks a strong political culture of human rights. The first stirrings of human rights concerns came to Brazil in the late 1970s through radicalized Catholic clergy who had come into contact with the work of Amnesty International, Americas Watch, and other international human rights organizations. The incipient activism was easily subverted by the Brazilian right, which played on people's fears of escalating urban violence and criticized the "liberal ruse" of human rights discourses (Dimenstein 1991; Brooke 1992). For example, in 1985 the Association of Police Chiefs of São Paulo produced a "Manifesto" addressed to the general population of the city. In it the police attacked the human rights policies of the then ruling center-leftist political coalition: "The situation today is one of total anxiety for you and total tranquility for those who kill, rob, and rape. . . . How many crimes have occurred in your neighborhood, and how many criminals were found responsible for them? . . . The bandits are protected by so-called "human rights" which the government thinks that you, an honest and hard working citizen, do not deserve." (quoted in Caldeira 1992:810).

Many people in all social classes seem to believe that only a military-type force can control criminality in Brazil. It is into this social space that poor children, especially as they become adolescents, enter mostly as victims but sometimes as the "hired guns" themselves. The new international discourse recognizing the citizenship rights of children and youths is incongruous with the popular perception in Brazil that street children as a class are dangerous protocriminals, who are too old to be protected as children and too young to claim the adult rights and privileges of citizenship.

A classified document produced at Brazil's Superior War College (ESG) in 1989 analyzes the problem of urban violence in terms of the coming-of-age of Brazil's wild and unsocialized street children (quoted in Prado 1991:5):

Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that there are some 200,000 unattached minors (which is a conservative estimate). By the beginning of the next century, we will have a contingent of criminals, malefactors, and murderers the size of our current army. . . . At that time, if police lack the means to confront such a situation, the constituted executive, legislative, and judicial powers could request the cooperation of the armed forces to take on the difficult task of neutralizing them [i.e., destroying them] in order to maintain law and order.

The "liberal" case made for the civil rights of street children is perceived by many as "an attack on decent people's rights to walk down the street in safety" (Dimenstein 1991:63-67). Critics of the new Child and Adolescent Statute assert that the laws will put even more dangerous kids on the street, that the new regulations will "tie the hands" of the police. There is also resistance to thinking of poor black adolescents as children. Children do not cause fear; children do not roam the city in "gangs"; children do not use drugs; and children do not steal.

Caldeira (1992:226) describes the alarming transformations of urban life in Brazil, where an increase in general insecurity and fear, together with the failure of public justice and law enforcement, has driven a downward spiral of increased violence, popular justice, segregation, and deterioration of public life. Residents in declining neighborhoods of São Paulo, faced with economic insecurity and a fear of violence and crime, are obsessed with building protective social barriers. Apartment high-rises, closed condominiums, gated communities, and private shopping centers constitute a new social geography of segregation, discrimination, and distinction. This social geography thus creates a city in which different social classes live closer to each other but are kept apart by physical barriers and systems of identification and control (264). Separation, which once may have been more geographic or symbolic (center: rich; periphery: poor), is becoming increasingly material and concrete, in the form of walls, private security forces, and electronic surveillance.

As the wealthy retreat into private enclaves, private schools, private security, and private transportation, the public sphere is abandoned to its own turmoil, lack of security, paucity of resources, and vigilante justice. The egalitarian vision of equal citizenship embodied in, and essential to, the new laws defending the rights of children is threatened by this social division, through which effective schooling, adequate nutrition, and even "childhood" itself become the privilege of a few. Children and adolescents of the poor have the most to lose in this new configuration of fear and exclusion. In the São Paulo described by Caldeira, the "two childhoods" of Brazil, already so distant, can only grow further apart.

The concepts of positive laws and equal rights challenge and undermine the privileges of the casa and its personal connections, including the privilege to ignore the fate of those who fall outside its realm. The new discourse on children's rights strives for, and assumes, an "egalitarian individualism"—the liberal democracy of the streets, to be exact—that remains antithetical to the social hierarchies characteristic of Brazilian social life. Conferring equal rights to *all* children requires significant redistributions of resources, power, and symbolic capital, and herein lies the democratic project's deepest obstacle. As Holston and Caldeira (1997), among others, have argued, *political* democracy is not enough. What is needed is an understanding of the social conditions and economic preconditions of citizenship that make political democracy possible.

In sum, although the Brazilian military surrendered its direct control over the country, the formal transfer of authority has not been complete, and it has not been accompanied by a demilitarization of everyday life. Despite the phenomenal growth of nongovernmental organizations, which would seem to bode well for the healthy expansion of civil society, Brazilian democracy is still weak, and it remains to be "consolidated" (Adorno 1995: 299). The new democracy has failed to maintain public order and the basic guarantee of the rule of law for all of Brazil's citizens. Brazil, like other Latin American nations, is a society that remains based on social exclusion, what Paulo Pimheiro (1996:18), director of the Center for the Study of Violence at the University of São Paulo, refers to as a "democracy without citizenship."

CONCLUSION

Street children, by "invading" the city centers, by frequenting the upper-class beaches of Rio de Janeiro and Recife, by engaging in petty crimes against the middle class, defy the segregated order of the modern city. By refusing to accept peaceably their status as *favelados*—that is, as "nobodies"—and by refusing to stay confined to the periphery and the slum, street

kids frustrate those who seek to maintain distance and difference from the urban poor.

The tactical survival of street kids, their claiming of public streets, parks, fountains, and beaches as their own, and, among older youths, their opportunistic appropriation of private property are a language of protest, defiance, and refusal. Street children are, in a very real sense, poor kids in revolt, violating social space, "disrespecting" property, publicly intoxicating themselves, and refusing to disappear. The risks and hazards of this inchoate rebellion are great: illiteracy, toxicity from inhaled drugs, chronic hunger and undernutrition, sexual exploitation, and (more recently) AIDS. It is this overall configuration of risks that leads child advocates in Brazil to defend the right of the child to be *in* the streets while recognizing that a life *of* the streets can only be self-destructive in the long run.

The new Child and Adolescent Statute, based on the Brazilian Constitution, recognizes the rights of children and the obligations of the state, civil society, and parents to protect these rights and to provide for the needs of children as individuals in a special condition of dependency. However, moving from the traditional practices of blaming and exclusion, which cast the street child as the problem, to an acceptance of collective responsibility for the welfare of the child and adolescent is a far greater challenge than writing the new laws. The implementation of the Child and Adolescent Statute is blocked, above all, by the popular discourse on violence that casts street children as hordes of actual or potential criminals, malefactors, and murderers.

The National Movement of Street Children (MNMNR), the organization of street educators and children's advocates mentioned earlier, is at the forefront of legislative reform. They represent a movement to engage and empower street children in their own environment: in the parks, bridges, bus stations, and plazas of the city. The MNMNR helps street children form their own organizations, develop their own leadership, and articulate their own demands, so that individual acts of survival can be translated into collective acts of resistance. The MNMNR activists recognize the anger and indignation of street adolescents as appropriate to their marginalized and precarious existence: "Rebelliousness and aggressiveness should not be neutralized or eliminated but rather oriented and socialized so they can become forces for creativity directed to the building of a new society" (dos Santos 1992:34).

The outcome of the struggle for childhood and for urban space in Brazil will depend in part on the success of activists in the MNMNR and other popular organizations that share its vision of a truly democratic society in which *all* children are valued. For all its power, however, the Brazilian street children's movement has been unable to strike at the root cause of the

problem. Until the chaotic economic and social conditions that cause desperately poor parents to lose their children to the streets are reversed, childhood for the vast majority in Brazil will signify a period of adversity to be survived and gotten over as quickly as possible, rather than a time of growth and nurturance to be extended and savored.

And in the meantime, the social reality for Brazilian street kids is harsh. As a guard at the jail in Bom Jesus so brutally put it, "Look, the life of a young marginal here is short. For a street kid to reach thirty years of age, it's a miracle." Perhaps we should consider the survival to adulthood of at least some of these ingenious street kids, struggling against all odds, to be the one true "economic miracle" of hypermodern, "democratic" Brazil.

NOTES

1. Two-thirds of the boys who reach the age of fifteen in Harlem, New York City, can expect to die in young or midadulthood. Fifteen-year-old boys in Harlem have less chance of surviving even to forty-five than their white counterparts nationwide have of reaching sixty-five. A team of medical and social science researchers, led by Dr. Arlene Geronimus, at the University of Michigan School of Public Health, has compared the mortality rates for black and white men and women aged fifteen to sixty-four in sixteen areas of the country. Premature death was found to be "excessive" in all the poverty-stricken areas but especially in the inner cities of the North. Only two-thirds of today's teenage girls in Harlem, for example, can expect to reach age sixty-five. The causes of the excess mortality are numerous and complex, including severe stress, cardiovascular disease, and cancer, in addition to the more stereotypical guns, drugs, violence, and AIDS (Geronimus 1996; see also article by Bob Herbet, "Death at an Early Age," *New York Times*, 2 December 1996).

2. The National Movement of Street Children (Movimento Nacional de Meninos e Meninas de Rua, or MNMMR), a voluntary nongovernmental organization, was founded in 1985 by activists and street educators who sought to empower and organize street kids in their own environment—the public spaces of city centers. At present the movement includes some three thousand street educators united under local commissions in twenty-five states. The movement reaches tens of thousands of street children and adolescents in the streets and parks of Brazil's major cities. Locally, the children are encouraged to organize themselves into *nucleos* (small cells), which typically bring together kids engaged in similar livelihoods—for example, kids who watch and wash cars, or kids who shine shoes—or children who occupy a common space. The city of Recife alone has about thirty nucleos. Representatives from the various nucleos meet weekly, and every three years the MNMMR organizes a national "encounter" in Brasilia, the nation's capital.

In addition to organizing children in the street, the MNMMR has given high priority to creating effective municipal and state children's rights councils and to forming alliances with other branches of the popular movement. Other priorities include the recruiting and training of street educators, the extension of the move-

ment to smaller municipalities in the nation's interior cities and towns, and the ongoing work of monitoring and denouncing human rights violations against children and minors. According to the MNMMR, over 90 percent of the murders committed against children are never brought to justice. In Berkeley, California, the Brazil Project of the International Child Resource Institute is collaborating with the MNMMR to bring greater local and international attention to the assassinations of Brazil's street kids. For further information, including fact sheets, petitions, and postcards addressed to Brazilian politicians, write to:

The Brazil Project
International Child Resource Institute
1801 Hopkins Street
Berkeley, California 94707
Tel (510) 525-8866

3. Brazil's Child and Adolescent Statute is based on the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989. It has now been ratified by 159 countries, including every country in the Americas with the exception of the United States. The *Convention* establishes, for the first time in an international context, that children are citizens with certain definable rights and that those rights, in the main, consist of specific protections guaranteed by their respective governments. In addition to those rights enumerated in the text (above), the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* refers to the child's inherent right to life (in the United States, such a moral concern seems to begin and end with the right to life of the embryo/fetus while we refuse to acknowledge the right to life of the *child* and all the attendant perquisites and requirements, such as access to the highest standard of health care, support to parents and families); the right to free expression of opinions; the right to form and join associations; the right to enter and leave the country in order to maintain the parent-child relationship (presumably even when the parents are illegal or undocumented immigrants to California—see California's Proposition 139); the right to be protected from torture, cruel treatment or punishment, unlawful arrest, and deprivation of liberty; and more.

4. Race and class are vexed categories in Brazil, as they are elsewhere. Traditionally, race was determined, at least in part, by class identity. While physical features and color differences were noted, money lightened the skin, just as its obvious lack darkened the skin. In a certain sense, then, there are no (social) "whites" in a favela, and all street children are "black," that is, socially blackened by their marginality and distance from "white" and "polite" Brazilian society. But this begs the question. In fact, even a casual perusal of photojournalism treating the residents of Brazil's favelas or the marginal denizens of the streets reveals a decided predominance of Afro-Brazilians, the predictable legacy of a plantation slave society, as one will find elsewhere in the new world (See also Skidmore 1991).

5. In his informative extended essay, *Hello Brazil* (1991), the Italian psychoanalyst and writer, Contardo Calligaris, describes the almost libertine social life, the luxurious privileges and personal freedoms, accorded middle-class Brazilian children, who are encouraged by their parents (especially fathers with respect to their sons) to express their desires and impulses and to speak and behave abusively and impudently toward their social inferiors, even mature adults. Calligaris suggests that

the child is the focus of the Brazilian adult's projected and frustrated desires for a world free of interdiction, sin, and prohibition—a trait Calligaris associates with the history of Brazil as an exploitative colonial society and former empire.

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Nothing Bad Intended: Child Discipline, Punishment, and Survival in a Shantytown in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Donna M. Goldstein

*Filho do rico é neném
Filho do pobre é coitado*

[*Child of the rich is a baby
Child of the poor is pitiable.*]

—ISAURA DE MELO SOUZA, "ORICO E O POBRE:
A DIFERENÇA ENTRE OS DOIS"

CHILDHOOD IS A PRIVILEGE OF THE RICH

In the early evening, along the beachfront in a city in Northeast Brazil, people are out strolling. A well-dressed white man of the upper class and his son, probably about the age of seven or eight, decide to stop and have their shoes shined by a dark-skinned boy, shoeless and not more than seven or eight years old himself. I was close enough to hear the father instructing his son how to speak to the other boy, how to demand a certain polish to be done in a certain way at a certain price. The father insisted that the job, both the shine and the orchestration of behavior between his son and the shoe-shine boy, be done to perfection. The shoe-shine boy was keen to show off his dexterity and did not need any instruction about what to do. At the end of the shine, the young son paid the shoe-shine boy with his father's money, and the shoe-shine boy, happy to have earned a few coins, walked off down the beach in search of new customers. The man and his son continued strolling along. (from author's field notes, 1988)

This scene, witnessed during an extended field visit in 1988, captures well the fact that childhood is lived and experienced differently by the disparate classes that characterize Brazilian urban culture. Indeed, in Brazil childhood is a privilege of the rich and practically nonexistent for the poor.

Recent literature on children in Brazil has begun to distinguish be-

Small Wars

The Cultural Politics of Childhood

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