



➡ Ricardo, Laboriaux, Rio de Janeiro, 2013; From OLYMPIC FAVELA: "Ricardo from Laboriaux, the city-facing side of Favela Rocinha, told us how the government is paying off individual families to leave their homes with stunning views across Rio's Lagoa neighborhood and city beaches, breaking up the longstanding neighborhood bit by bit with the demolition of each home."

RUNAWAY RIO RENEWAL

A STUNNING NEW PHOTO BOOK REVEALS HOW **EFFORTS TO READY THE BIGGEST CITY IN BRAZIL FOR WORLD CUP** AND OLYMPIC TOURISM IMPACTS THE POOR

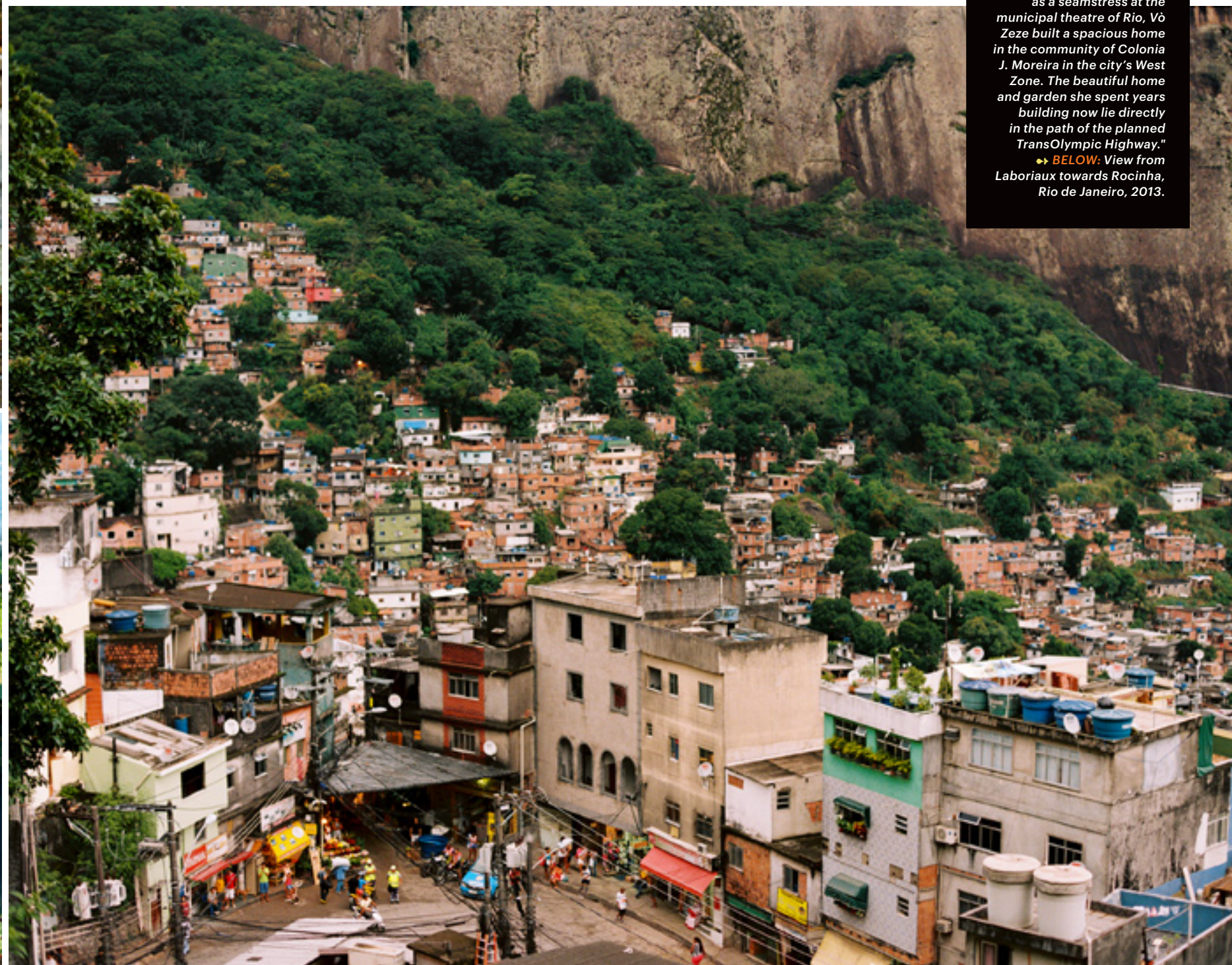
PHOTOS AND ESSAY EXCERPTS BY MARC OHREM-LECLEF
FROM HIS BOOK OLYMPIC FAVELA

"**V**ai com deus" is a common form of saying good-bye in Brazil. In many of Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* [slums] where 1.4 million

locals live, the city's housing authority is enforcing policies to remove families from their homes and demolish those homes immediately after—often without much, if any, notice and often with use of force—to make way for infrastructure projects in preparation of hosting the World Cup (2014) and the 2016 Olympic Games.

In response to news reports of widespread evictions of residents from their homes and businesses, immediately followed by demolition, beginning in summer of 2012, I set out to portray the people directly and indirectly affected by completed and planned evictions, as well as the residents organizing their neighbors in resistance.

The people I met face extraordinary challenges: city officials who use ever-changing tactics to sow fear and insecurity and to actively erode the sense of community; and the lengthy, complicated legal disputes they must wage to avoid eviction and assert their rights to remain in the homes where they have grown up. Their firsthand accounts of their uphill battle, of the perseverance and ingenuity they employed to build their homes, and of the history of their communities (many residents we spoke with are third-generation residents of their neighborhoods) revealed the full breadth of their fears, and underlined the need for their voices to be heard.



♦ **LEFT:** Jacqueline with her son Jackson, Morro da Providência, Rio de Janeiro, 2013 ♦ **BOTTOM LEFT:** Vò Zeze in her garden, Colonia Moreira, Rio de Janeiro, 2013. From OLYMPIC FAVELA: "After a long career as a seamstress at the municipal theatre of Rio, Vò Zeze built a spacious home in the community of Colonia J. Moreira in the city's West Zone. The beautiful home and garden she spent years building now lie directly in the path of the planned TransOlympic Highway." ♦ **BELOW:** View from Laboriaux towards Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro, 2013.

The works in OLYMPIC FAVELA create a canvas portraying those who choose to stay and defend their home in the face of great adversity and state power. In an effort to call attention to the specific circumstances at play in Rio de Janeiro, I have created two parallel bodies of work:

One group of images consists of portraits of the people who live in the *favelas*, the people who make them the vibrant neighborhoods they are. Many of the residents are photographed in front of their homes, which have been designated for removal ... with spray-painted code numbers.

The second group features directed images of residents posing with flaming emergency torches in their communities. Referencing iconic imagery ranging from Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* and Bartholdi's *Liberty Enlightening the World* to news imagery of the Arab Spring, these photographs invoke ideas of liberation, independence, resistance, protest and crisis, whilst making use of the core symbol of the Olympic Games—the torch.





➡ **ABOVE:** Douglas, "Minha Vida Minha Casa Realengo", Rio de Janeiro, 2013. I photographed him in a replacement housing complex where he and his family were moved to - back cover of OLYMPIC FAVELA book. ➡
RIGHT: Samuel, Babilonia, Rio de Janeiro, 2013 ➡
OPPOSITE: Larissa with her friends, Colonia Moreira, Rio de Janeiro, 2013.

Together with the portraits, these images juxtapose the dynamics of celebration and togetherness with those of struggle based on social-economic disparity, which the mega-events are bringing to Rio de Janeiro and its citizens. In Autumn of 2012, I set out to portray the people directly and indirectly affected by the policies of systematic removal, with the help of a number of residents who had begun to organize their communities to resist the evictions. I returned to the city early in the summer of 2013 to continue this work, shortly before widespread protests erupted against the government's spending in preparation for the World Cup and the Olympics.

With my guide, Cafe, an aspiring filmmaker from Rio, I met residents in 13 of the city's favelas—communities both welcoming and with an omnipresent hue of danger—who shared their stories with us.



➡ **RIGHT:** View from Estradinha, Rio de Janeiro, 2013 ➡ **BELOW:** Tiago, Lagoa Japarepagua close to Favela Vila Autodromo, Rio de Janeiro, 2013. ➡ **BOTTOM:** Seu Barrao of Favela Vila Autodromo, Rio de Janeiro, 2013. From OLYMPIC FAVELA book: "Seu Barrão and his son Tiago posed for me on their boat in the expansive waters of the Lagoa de Jacarepagua, close to their home in Favela Vila Autodromo. A fisherman, Seu Barrão fears the loss of his livelihood if he is forced to relocate to a remote area, as has been projected by the city planners."



After spending time together, when it was time to move on, always came the words, spoken softly and with great sincerity: "Vai com Deus." Their well-wishing goodbye stuck with me, for in that moment, with them wishing me luck, a reversal of roles played out that highlighted the broader experience I had: Despite their incredibly difficult circumstances, the residents of the favelas retain a deep-seated optimism and generosity—and a sense of hope that their place in Rio will be respected. ♦



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A photography book by Marc Ohrem-Leclef, to be published by DAMIANI in summer 2014, pre-orders available on Kickstarter.com.

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