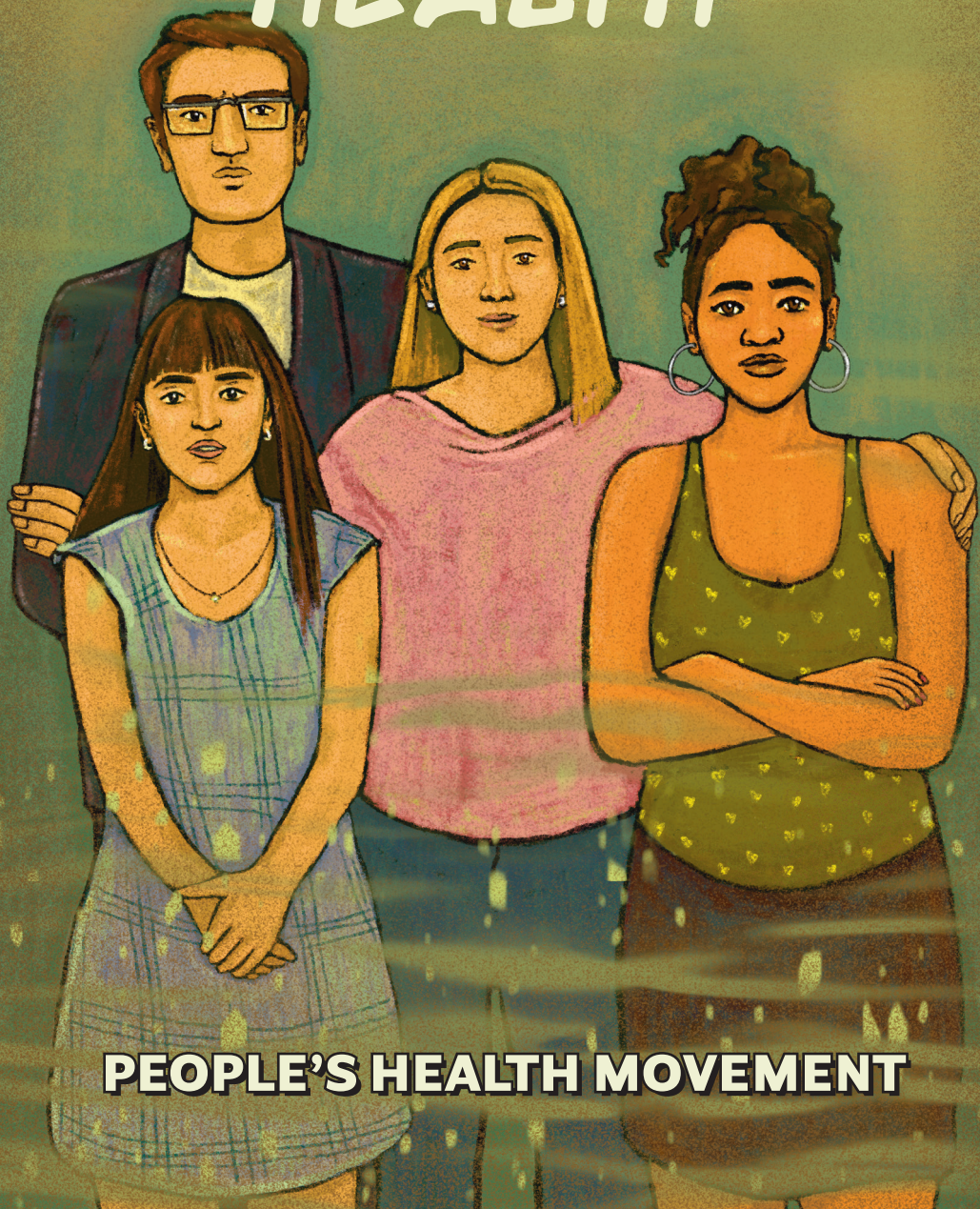


# GENDER JUSTICE IN HEALTH



**PEOPLE'S HEALTH MOVEMENT**

In 2000, concerned activists, academics and health workers got together for the first People's Health Assembly, where the People's Charter for Health was developed and the People's Health Movement (PHM) was born. Today, PHM is a global network bringing together grassroots health activists, civil society organizations and academic institutions from around the world, particularly from low and middle income countries.

Guided by the People's Charter for Health, PHM works on various programmes and activities and is committed to Comprehensive Primary Health Care and addressing the Social, Environmental and Economic Determinants of Health. Equity, ecological well-being and peace are at the heart of PHM's vision for a better world: a world in which a healthy life for all is a reality; a world that respects, appreciates and celebrates all life and diversity; a world that enables the flowering of people's talents and abilities to enrich each other; a world in which people's voices guide the decisions that shape our lives.

In April 2024, PHM will hold its fifth People's Health Assembly (PHA5) in Argentina, bringing together activists from all over the world to share analysis, struggles and strategies around 5 axes that are key for the health of people and the planet:

1. Towards the transformation of health systems
2. Gender justice in health
3. Ecosystem health: food, energy, climate
4. Resisting forced migration and war
5. Promoting ancestral and popular knowledges and practices

This booklet is meant to prepare and accompany the discussion of axis 3 "Gender justice in health"



Health for All Now!  
**People's Health Movement**



<https://www.phmovement.org>



People Tree Studio is an independent graphic design and art studio working with graphics, comics, murals, textiles and visual storytelling. It is based in Goa, India and is founded by artist Orijit Sen and curator Gurpreet Sidhu.  
<https://www.peopletreestudio.com/>

Cordelia B Francis is a freelance journalist, writer and storyteller. She lives in Goa, India.  
[cordeliagoa@gmail.com](mailto:cordeliagoa@gmail.com)

Pakhi Sen is a visual artist and illustrator based out of Goa. Interested in working in collaborative and community driven projects, her work is often centred around themes related to her natural and social environment, identity and intimacy.  
[pakhixsen@gmail.com](mailto:pakhixsen@gmail.com)

Darren D'Souza is a graphic designer & music producer based in Goa.

# GENDER JUSTICE IN HEALTH

WRITTEN BY CORDELIA B. FRANCIS. ILLUSTRATED BY PAKHI SEN. EDITED BY ORIJT SEN.

BRUNO AND LAURA SANTOS LIVE IN AN AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD. THEY ARE GETTING READY TO ATTEND THE WEDDING OF THEIR HOUSEKEEPER, BETA, WHEN THEIR DAUGHTER WALKS INTO THEIR BEDROOM.



Marcia, change your clothes. We are going to the favela. Those guys will get the wrong ideas about you.



Don't shame her, Bruno! If they can't control their behavior, it's not due to what she wears. The guys in the favela are just as chauvinistic as those in this neighborhood.



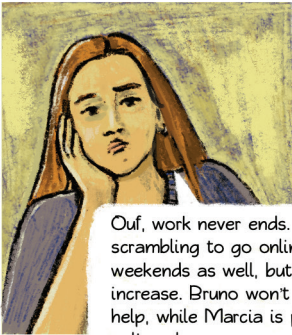
Sexual violence is a big problem in this country. Do you know 26% of Brazilians agree that 'women who wear revealing clothes deserve to be attacked'. Not surprisingly, we have the fifth highest rate of femicide in the world.



BETA'S WEDDING



**A MONTH LATER, THE PANDEMIC HIT, INITIATING COUNTRYWIDE LOCKDOWNS. WITHOUT BETA'S HELP, LAURA HAS TO SHOULDER THE HOUSEWORK, THE COOKING AND WORK FULL TIME AS A CONTENT MEDIA MANAGER.**



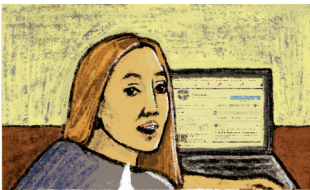
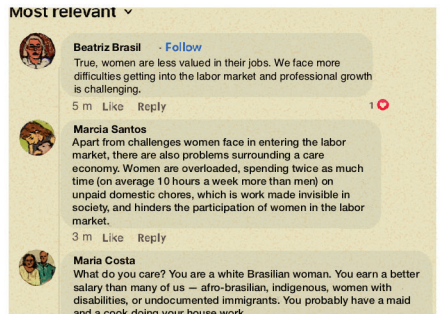
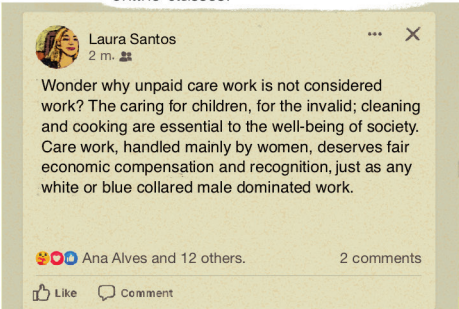
Uuf, work never ends. Companies are scrambling to go online. I'm working weekends as well, but with no salary increase. Bruno won't lift a finger to help, while Marcia is preoccupied with online classes.



I really miss Beta!



\*click click\*

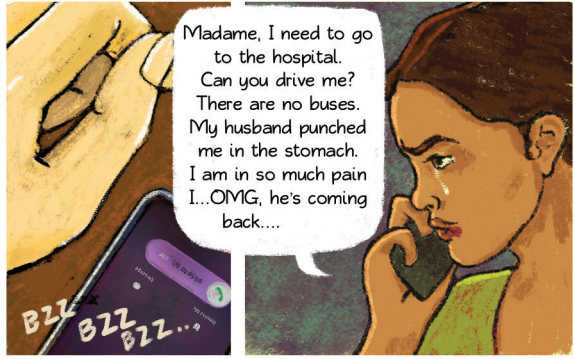


Marcia, how come you know all about this?



Thanks to papa's patriarchal comment earlier, I'm doing a project on gender justice in Brasil.

**GENDER JUSTICE, JUST LIKE RACIAL JUSTICE, IS A CRITICAL ISSUE IN TODAY'S SOCIETY. DESPITE WORLDWIDE EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM, GENDER INJUSTICE CONTINUES TO BE AN OBSTACLE FOR WOMEN SEEKING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE.**



Madame, I need to go to the hospital. Can you drive me? There are no buses. My husband punched me in the stomach. I am in so much pain I..OMG, he's coming back....

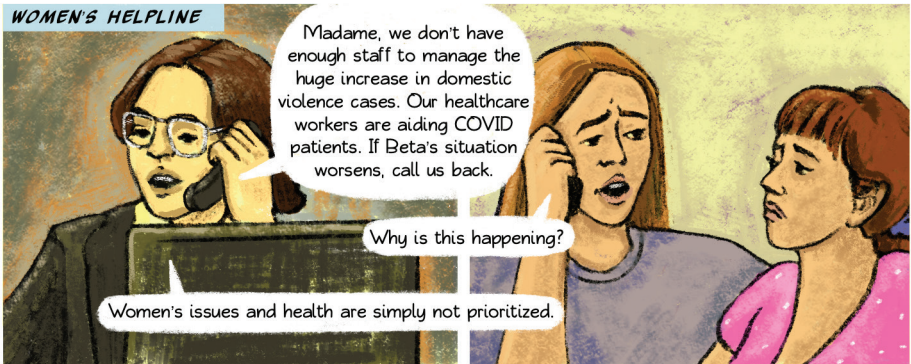


Beta! I'm calling the police!



**POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Please call the women's helpline. We are not handling domestic abuse cases during the pandemic.

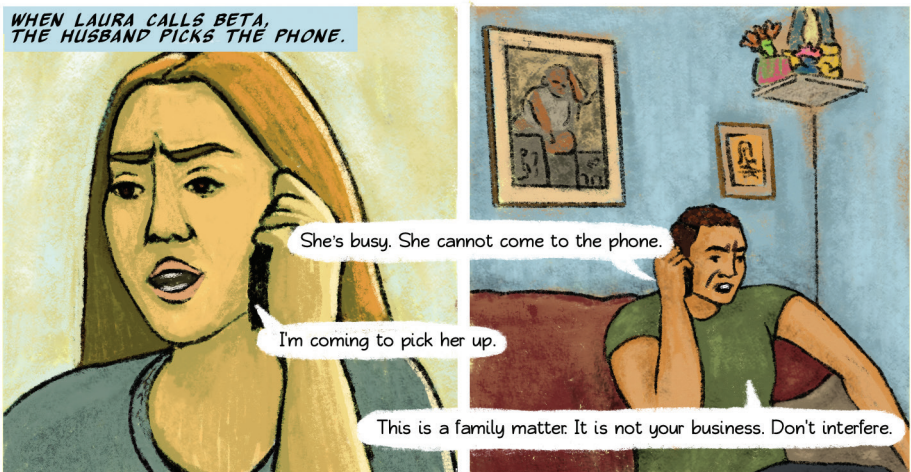


**WOMEN'S HELPLINE**

Madame, we don't have enough staff to manage the huge increase in domestic violence cases. Our healthcare workers are aiding COVID patients. If Beta's situation worsens, call us back.

Why is this happening?

Women's issues and health are simply not prioritized.



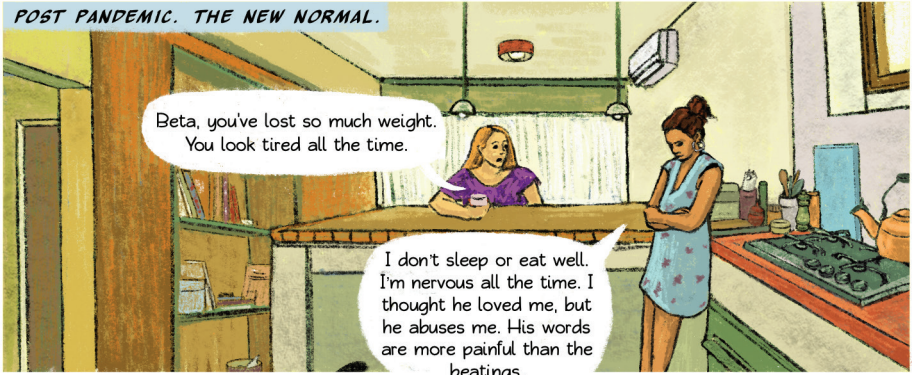
**WHEN LAURA CALLS BETA, THE HUSBAND PICKS THE PHONE.**

She's busy. She cannot come to the phone.

I'm coming to pick her up.

This is a family matter. It is not your business. Don't interfere.

POST PANDEMIC. THE NEW NORMAL.



Beta, you've lost so much weight. You look tired all the time.

I don't sleep or eat well. I'm nervous all the time. I thought he loved me, but he abuses me. His words are more painful than the beatings.



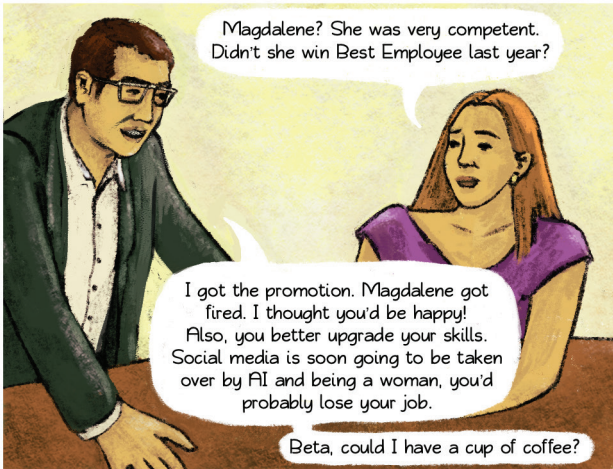
Leave him, Beta. You can stay with us until you find a new place. I'll help you.



They are always chatting. They don't seem to do any work. And, they talk about equal pay. Ridiculous!



Laura, you know Magdalene, right? Our company is cost cutting and it was either her or me. Guess who got the promotion and an increased salary?

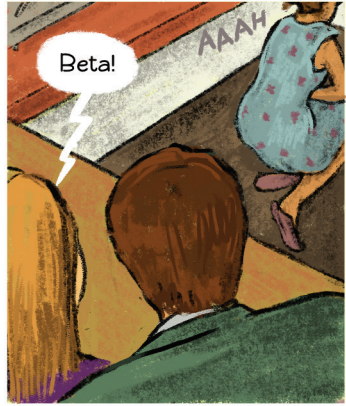


Magdalene? She was very competent. Didn't she win Best Employee last year?

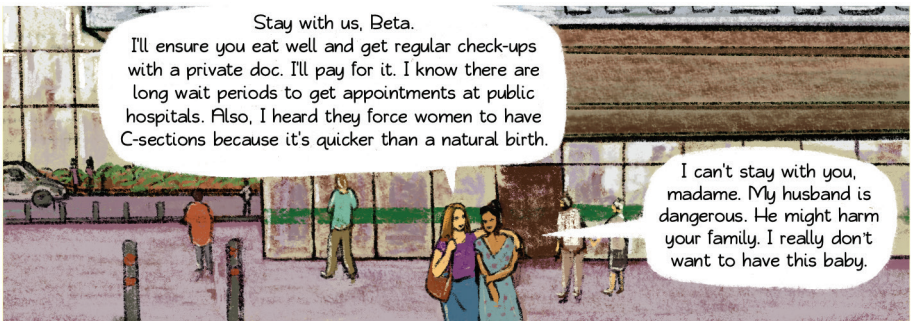
I got the promotion. Magdalene got fired. I thought you'd be happy! Also, you better upgrade your skills. Social media is soon going to be taken over by AI and being a woman, you'd probably lose your job.

Beta, could I have a cup of coffee?

**A RECENT WORLD BANK STUDY IN BRAZIL FOUND THAT IN 2010, WOMEN'S WAGES EQUALED 71% OF THOSE OF MEN. AFRO-BRAZILIAN WOMEN EARN LESS THAN WHITE WOMEN AND MEN WITH THE SAME LEVEL OF EDUCATION. ON AVERAGE, AFRO-BRAZILIAN WOMEN EARN US\$ 2.50 PER HOUR COMPARED TO US\$ 4.02 FOR WHITE WOMEN AND (US\$ 5) FOR WHITE MEN. THIS SCENARIO IS AGGRAVATED AMONG UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT WOMEN.**



She is three months pregnant, underweight and anaemic. She needs rest, calm and a healthy diet for her and the baby.



Stay with us, Beta. I'll ensure you eat well and get regular check-ups with a private doc. I'll pay for it. I know there are long wait periods to get appointments at public hospitals. Also, I heard they force women to have C-sections because it's quicker than a natural birth.

I can't stay with you, madame. My husband is dangerous. He might harm your family. I really don't want to have this baby.



I'll go and stay with my sister. He won't dare come there. He's afraid of her. Tomorrow, while he's at work, I'll pack my bags and leave him for good.

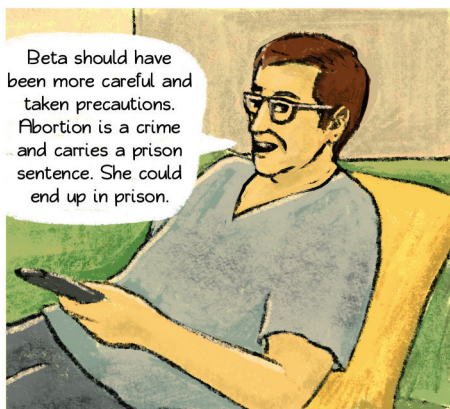
I'm glad you've finally decided to separate.



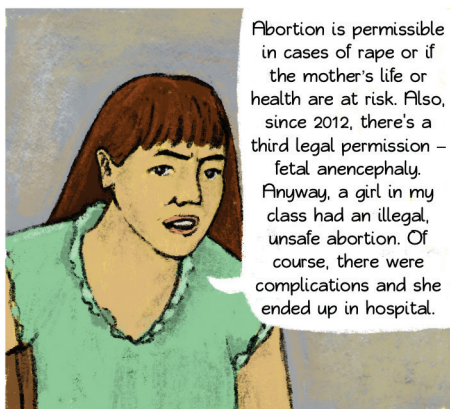
How is Beta, mama?



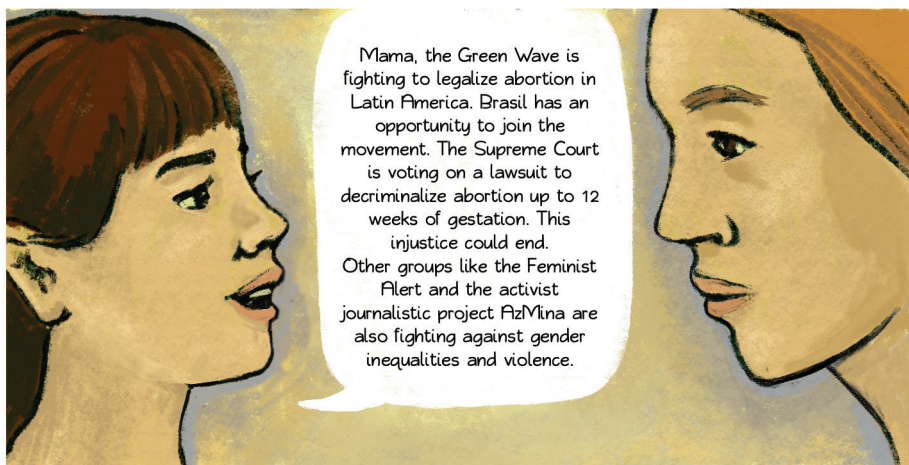
Turns out, Beta is pregnant, but she doesn't want to keep the baby.



Beta should have been more careful and taken precautions. Abortion is a crime and carries a prison sentence. She could end up in prison.



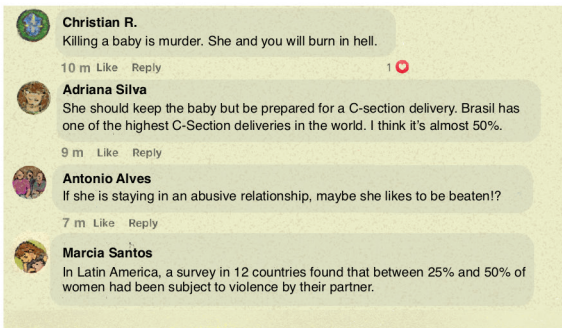
Abortion is permissible in cases of rape or if the mother's life or health are at risk. Also, since 2012, there's a third legal permission - fetal anencephaly. Anyway, a girl in my class had an illegal, unsafe abortion. Of course, there were complications and she ended up in hospital.



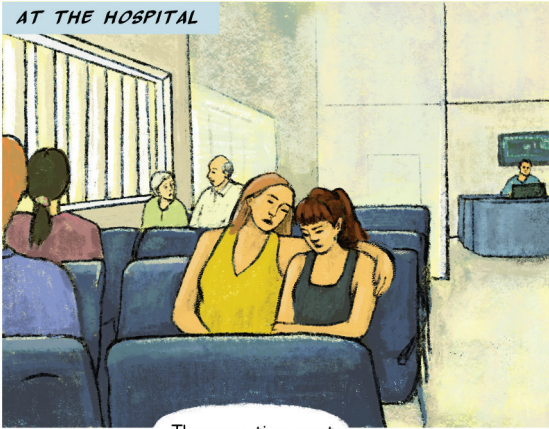
Mama, the Green Wave is fighting to legalize abortion in Latin America. Brasil has an opportunity to join the movement. The Supreme Court is voting on a lawsuit to decriminalize abortion up to 12 weeks of gestation. This injustice could end. Other groups like the Feminist Alert and the activist journalistic project FizMina are also fighting against gender inequalities and violence.

**ABORTION IS AN ESSENTIAL HEALTH SERVICE, AND THAT IS WHY THE WHO HAS RECOMMENDED DECRIMINALIZING ABORTION, TREATING IT NOT AS A MATTER FOR THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM, BUT AS THE MEDICAL PROCEDURE IT IS. THE CRIMINALIZATION OF ABORTION DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTS BLACK WOMEN, AFRO-BRAZILIANS, QUILOMBOLAS, INDIGENOUS WOMEN, AND PEOPLE FROM LOW-INCOME BACKGROUNDS. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE UNHRC RECENTLY RECOMMENDED THAT BRAZIL AMEND ITS LEGISLATION TO ENSURE SAFE, LEGAL, AND EFFECTIVE ACCESS TO ABORTION.**





AT THE HOSPITAL



The operation went well and Beta's vital signs are stable. You should go home and get some rest.

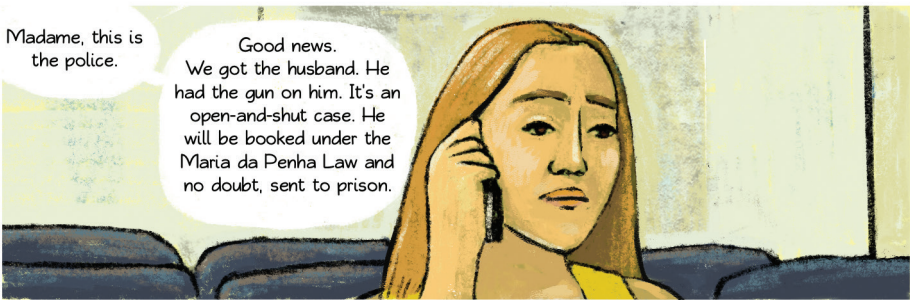
What about the baby?

Sorry, we couldn't save the baby. You know these cases are so common in Brasil.



Madame, this is the police.

Good news. We got the husband. He had the gun on him. It's an open-and-shut case. He will be booked under the Maria da Penha Law and no doubt, sent to prison.



I guess there is some justice in this world after all.

Yes, but much more needs to be done. Let's get Beta well again. We've also contacted a community health worker who works with victims of domestic violence. Together, we'll get Beta back on her feet.



## References:

*Brazilian Internet Steering Committee*

Link: <https://www.cgi.br/about/>

*SAHR*

Link: <https://www.sa-hr.org/>

*National Library of Medicine*

*A closer look into Brazil's healthcare system: What can we learn?*

Link: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10231901/>


*The World Bank*

*What does it mean to be a woman in Brazil? The answer will surprise you*

Link: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/03/08/ser-mujer-brasil>

*Center for reproductive rights*

Link: <https://reproductiverights.org/green-wave-brazil-supreme-court/>



*The story is set in Brazil and explores the intersecting experiences of two women facing gender inequalities in a male dominated society. Laura, a privileged upper-class woman, and Beta, her Afro-Brazilian housekeeper, experience patriarchy in varying degrees, determined by either their class privileges or lack of.*

*The story opens with Laura and her family attending Beta's wedding in a favela. As Beta's marriage sinks into domestic violence during the lockdowns of the Pandemic, Laura tries to navigate her own encounters with sexism at home, in the workplace, and online.*

*Things take a turn when Beta reaches out to Laura for help after a particularly violent episode at home. Drawn into Beta's struggles with marriage, domestic violence, reproductive rights, and the devaluation of women's contributions in society, Laura, along with her daughter Marcia, begin to confront their own privilege and complicity.*

#### *About the Series Editors*

*Chiara Bodini, founding member of the Centre for International and Intercultural Health (CSI) of the University of Bologna, Italy; a long-standing activist of the People's Health Movement and co-editor of Global Health Watch 6.*

*She can be contacted at: [chiara@phmovement.org](mailto:chiara@phmovement.org)*

*Ronald Labonté, Professor Emeritus and former Distinguished Research Chair in Globalization and Health Equity, School of Public Health and Epidemiology, University of Ottawa, Canada; co-editor Global Health Watch 6.*

*He can be contacted at: [rlabonte@uottawa.ca](mailto:rlabonte@uottawa.ca)*