**Gloria Schultz:** You are listening to the PYD lab. (Music plays)

The podcast for implementers who want to examine innovative approaches to Positive Youth Development.

Hosted by journalist and YP2LE Communications Manager Natasha Zena, this podcast is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development or USAID.

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**Natasha Zena:** Hi, it's Natasha and we're thrilled today to be joined in the lab with Fernanda Ribeiro.

Fernanda is currently an undergraduate law student who is busy working on empowering young people, justice and democracy, and in particular, gender equality.

She believes that structural violence can only be combated with structural changes, so she works to empower and develop communities to make girls, women, and young people see themselves as political forces.

She joins these three focus areas to achieve a more just world that benefits her entire community. Fernanda welcome.

**Fernanda Ribeiro:** Thank you.

It's a pleasure to be here talking a little bit about my work and what I dedicate my life to achieve.

**Natasha Zena:** Well, we appreciate you so much for coming on and talking to us, you know in the midst of all these things that, you know, you and your community are currently dealing with.

I was excited to talk to you because it seems like you're doing so much. How has covid affected your local community?

**Fernanda Ribeiro:** In Brazil the situation is, is not good at all.

About 20 million children have had their education affected. Cases of femicide and domestic violence have increased a lot. We are having a daily average of deaths above a thousand deaths, and we are experiencing a health and economic crisis that is affecting the entire country.

So basically, we are going back to the hunger map, and we can say that the situation is getting even worse, so we had problems in believing in the power of Coronavirus.

So basically, we were staying at home, but we did not have a real lockdown so we nev- basically Brazil basically never stopped so the situation is, is terrible to be honest.

**Natasha Zena:** Do you feel optimistic about ways things can improve?

**Fernanda Ribeiro:** It's hard to tell because vaccinations started this week, and we are having good results but depending on what is happening in the government, I - I'm afraid to say that I believe we are going to be all vaccinated this year; and for example, last week Manaus, the capital of Amazonas, one of the most affected cities in Brazil, were left without oxygen.

People were dying because there was, wasn't oxygen.

So, we are living as I said a real crisis, a human crisis, economic crisis. So, I really don't know what to expect from now.

**Natasha Zena:** Just to kind of lead us into some of the work that you're doing, it is about, gender equality.

I have a special love for, for women and women work. Some of it involves structural violence, you know, previously you just noted about domestic violence kind of you know increasing during this time, and could you talk to us not only a little bit about the work that you're doing but defining what structural violence is?

**Fernanda Ribeiro:** Structural violence is something deeper than just violence.

For example, violence is when we are walking down the streets and we are robbed but structural violence is something deeper.

It’s something that is inside the society, inside the government. It’s something that comes from above. It’s not only talking about individuals.

For example, talking about gender inequality and structural violence, is more than a man killing a woman. For example, femicide. The definition of femicide is a structural violence that the government allowed. So, for the femicide to happen a lot of violence like domestic violence, the fact that girls are not going to school, and things like that. Things like the government is not doing, result in a worse situation like femicide, domestic violence.

It's all connected with a lack of public policies, what the government isn't doing.

So, we can define in a way that everyone can comprehend what structural violence is.

It's basically something that is inside the entire society, but it's also allowed by the government.

**Natasha Zena:** So how did you kind of get involved with this work?

**Fernanda Ribeiro:** This is something that was always part of my life. I was born in Rio.

Rio de Janeiro, one of the most violent cities in Brazil, and maybe in the world.

And since I was a little kid, a little girl, I’ve always seen cases of femicide on TV happening in my city, happening in my neighborhood, so structural violence in all of the ways it can be it can surround us was always present in my life.

And when I understood that this was not, not something that was the individual's fault but something bigger, something is structural something that the government wasn't doing, the, that kids were dying, the women were being killed every day, I decided to do something.

I started studying International Law and Human Rights.

I started understanding more, learning more, talking to women that were victims of those kind of violence, and I decided to do something about it. I started studying how everything is connected.

So, I started working, trying to understand how to reduce those kinds of inequalities and how could I do it, being a lawyer student, and trying to change the scenarios.

So, for example, last year I created a project called Vote Nelas Fortaleza, which means Vote for Her, to increase female representation in politics in my city, because last year we were having elections.

So, one way I found to convey to fight against those kinds of violence was to encouraging women to start working on politics.

More than that, I wanted to make the population vote for women so, so we can start making public policies regarding those kinds of subjects: women rights, education, and things that we know that there's a lot of studies compromising that women are more dedicated to.

**Natasha Zena:** I - I participated in a political institute a few years ago and one of the things that I learned there is the stat was something like a woman has to be asked at least three to five times to consider a political seat before she even actually considers running for it.

Because often you'll see that a woman is more than qualified for a position but hesitates for a number of reasons.

In the work that you're doing in encouraging women to get involved in politics, what has been you know their reaction or the feedback of some women?

Have women been receptive to either running or participating in political training?

**Fernanda Ribeiro:** Last year, we interviewed almost forty candidates for my city and one thing that was - we could see in every candidate - was that they were they were surprised that we were talking to them and trying to understand what they were facing, what were their most, difficult moments trying to get in politics.

When we talk about political violence against women in Brazil and how difficult it was for me having (being) 18 years old trying to fight against this system and trying to encourage women who were facing such a difficult time after deciding to get into politics and work with it, it was difficult.

A lot of times I felt so demotivated, tired, exhausted, because it is hard to see a way to change this reality.

So, what motivates me was seeing how happy those women were when they saw that they were not alone, when they saw that they had our support, the support of our followers and we created this network connecting those women so they could meet each other even being from different parties.

When we joined all of that, it was pretty difficult, you know, but it was awesome that we could meet each other. We elected eight, eight women and it was more than the last election, so we were super excited and happy, and we are willing to see what those amazing women are going to do for our city.

Six of them worked with us, so we succeeded in our mission, and we decided to do not give up.

We had black women, we had lesbian women being elected, and this was just amazing you know.

We were so happy; we are so happy, and we are willing to do more in the next elections.

**Natasha Zena:** Congratulations, that is amazing!

**Fernanda Ribeiro:** (chuckle) Thank you!

I think it's important to mention that one thing that inspired me a lot to create this project was the death of Marielle Franco.

She was a politician from Rio.

She was killed, and it was ... the motivation was a political fight.

So, she was a black woman, a lesbian woman, a woman that came from favela and she did a great job, and she were killed because she did a great job.

So, this inspired me, inspired all my volunteers, and all the women that were working with us.

All the candidates that were working with us, they - we had this thing to connect us.

As I said we were not working on with the left or the right, we were working with women that doesn't want to be killed by doing their job. You know, so, it was something that united us. The desire to change the reality.

Everyone is involved with something that is not right.

For example, since I was a little girl, I saw real women being killed, my classmates being killed, and what motivates me, and still motivates me, is that I chose to not close my eyes. Believing that I can change the reality and choosing to not close my eyes, choosing to see what is happening and understand why it's happening and choosing to use my power to do something about it is what motivates me.

And when I understand why she were murdered I see that it could be me tomorrow, it could be my sister, it could be anyone and I don't want that more women have the same destiny.

I truly believe that everyone has the fire inside yourself. We just need to keep it on and keep motivating it, understanding that we have the power.

Something that really demotivate young people to act is believing that we cannot do something, but when we understand that we can do something, things change, things happen, you find the right people to help you.

So, it's about that, you know, keeping - understand that we can do something about the situation.

**Natasha Zena:**  When you talk about some of the pitfalls, you know, that may have befell some of the - the young people that you knew when you were growing up, what do you think helped you kind of avoid those pitfalls? I always say, you know, successful people didn't totally get there by themselves. Who, who were some people in your life, possibly, you know, who created a safe space for you to kind of be in as you were growing up?

**Fernanda Ribeiro:** I came from, [an] extremely poor family. I was born based in favela in Rio but something that was always present in my life, in my family's life, was that we valued education a lot.

So, my mother, and my father both started working when they were 13, and my mother did not give up on theirs - on her studies.

So, she kept studying and working since she - she was a teenager, and because of her me and my sister we always studied, we always tried to have a better life, to provide my family a better life. So basically, what changed in my life was separating me from my friends that is still living in that violent environment was that I had a family that made me believe in education.

We are standing for the others, working on this crisis, and trying to change this reality was because we had education.

We were taught to admire education.

We do not value that a lot, you know. And that's not kid's fault. It's a - it's a structure violence. It's another structural violence that separate those things.

Basically, the answer for your - your question is education. It's always education, in every form of education, every way of education.

In talking about culture, sports, books, it's everything education and that's what changed the situation we are living.

**Natasha Zena:**  Yes. Education is so important.

I think it's a great also tie-in and lead-in to, your PYD recommendations.

This is the fun part of the podcast. We ask each guest to come loaded with their three PYD recommendations. PYD standing for “Published,” “Youth,” and “Disrupt.”

So, each guest kind of comes to the podcast with a youth development related topic that they recommend that's published. It could be a book, it could be an article, it could be a report. We ask them to tell us a little bit about a youth-related project or young leader who is doing something in their community. And then we ask them to come with a disruptive idea, an innovative idea around a project, or a resource, or youth-related challenge that you hope to tackle.

So, Fernanda, I am going to turn it over to you. First, please tell us about your published recommendation.

**Fernanda Ribeiro:** My published recommendation was the website *Politics for Her.* I am a volunteer for *Politics for Her.*

So, I strongly recommend all of you to go to the website and learn a little bit more. I recommended *Politics for Her* because it is a blog where you can understand more about women participation in politics and peacemaking process, public policies formulation, and how it is important to have women and young girls in leadership positions.

So, I recommend it because there you can find the most different kind of information and articles, publications, and things like that where you can understand more about how important it is to have women occupying spaces, women seeing themselves as political forces and working to change their realities and our reality.

**Natasha Zena:**  That's exciting and we will have the website link for that available in the description for those who want to visit the blog and kind of see how they can get involved.

The second recommendation you have for youth. What's a resource or a project or authored-led subject that you recommend that people kind of check out?

**Fernanda Ribeiro:** My recommendation is to visit the website of global changemakers.

It is an international organization that supports youth-led sustainable development, and their mission is to enhance the capacity of young people to develop and implement their solutions to global challenges.

So, there you can find tools, you can connect with mentors, and things like that to change your community and to understand how you can solve some problems. They also offer courses and webinars, and things like that. It's amazing.

**Natasha Zena:**  Awesome. And last but not least my favorite, because I love disrupting and innovative stuff. What is a disruptive innovative idea or project or resource that you recommend that currently does or can be used to tackle a youth-related challenge?

**Fernanda Ribeiro:** I believe that one thing that changed in my life and changed my perspective about everything was the online forums for young people. For example, what we have in YouthLead in global changemakers.

I believe this is a, no it's not that sophisticated or something that different, but those online forums, those spaces for young people to express themselves and to talk about their reality, the problems they're facing, and understand more about different realities - it's just amazing.

I - I use a lot of forums like the YouthLead, The United People Global Forum, and I strongly recommend because you can understand more about problems that you're facing in your society and you can think about it in a different perspective, because you can understand how it is affecting a different country, a different community, and then you can find better solutions to - new solutions to old problems. It's amazing. (laughter)

**Natasha Zena:** I’m totally with you and I love your recommendations.

Sometimes I feel like online whether it's, you know, internet forums, or social media, sometimes they get a bad rap, because of some of the negative things that could take place on them. But there's so much good that can really happen on some of these forums and online, where people like yourself get to connect and share ideas and - and work together to spark change. So, I love that recommendation.

I just want to thank you so much again for joining us today on the podcast. It has been such a pleasure learning about the important work that you're doing.

Is there a place where people could kind of go to follow up, whether that's your YouthLead profile or LinkedIn if they want to learn and continue to track your involvement in ways that they might be able to get involved with some of the work that you're doing?

**Fernanda Ribeiro:** Yeah. You can find me on our YouthLead platform. It would be a pleasure to connect with you - you all there.

So, if you want to talk to me or ask me something about what I’m doing, about Brazil's situation, anything you can talk to me there.

**Natasha Zena:**  Well, thank you so much for your time today, and have a lovely afternoon.

**Fernanda Ribeiro:** Thank you so much. It was an honor to be here talking about my experience and encouraging young people to get involved with YouthLead. It’s an amazing platform and I hope to see you out there.

**Natasha Zena:** Thank you so much for tuning in to our first episode.

We're really excited to have you and just remember that you can access Fernanda's awesome recommendations, as well as a host of others, over at [youthpower.org/PYDLab](https://youthpower.org/PYDLab).

This month we're giving away three additional resources.

The first is the Youth and Peace and Security Starter Kit. It's packed with how-to's that give you a better understanding of some of the drivers and effects of violence.

The second is a toolkit for Youth Inclusion and Democracy, Human Rights and Governance. You would use this toolkit for designing, managing, and evaluating any youth DRG-related programs that you're running.

And the third is Youth and Civic Engagement. Now, that's a starter kit that gives you the 13 best resources from [youthlead.org](https://youthlead.org) that are related to youth and civic engagement. It's a great starting point for youth who are interested in becoming engaged citizens and who want to make a difference in their communities.

Until next time. This is Natasha and you've been in the PYD Lab.