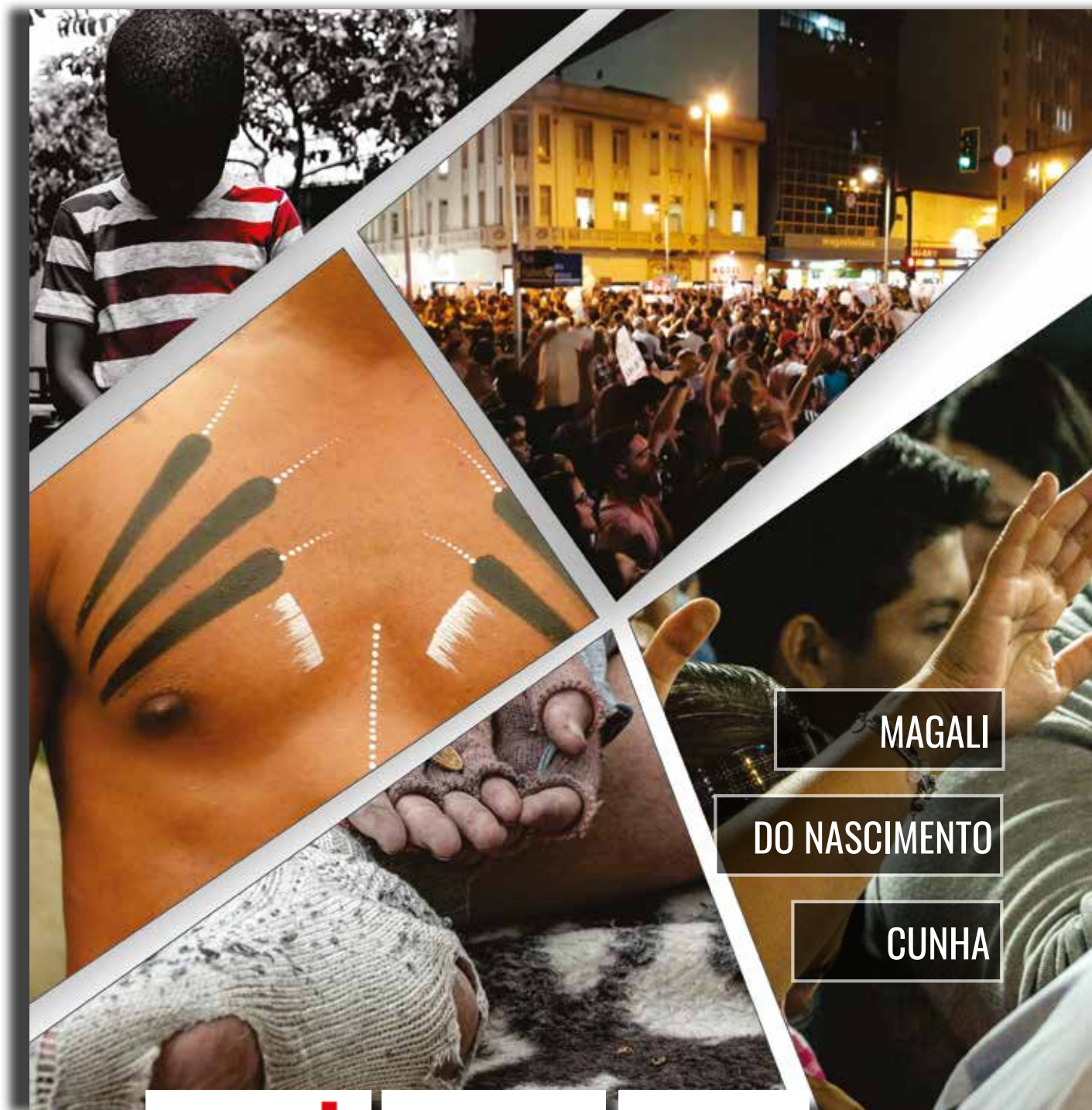


Fundamentalisms, the crisis of democracy and the threat to human rights in South America:

trends and challenges for action



MAGALI

DO NASCIMENTO

CUNHA

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Author:

Magali do Nascimento Cunha

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Espanhol: Carlos José Beltrán Acero

Inglês: Samyra Lawall

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Introduction

Transformations in the public arena in socio-political, economic, cultural, and environmental terms in South America observed during the last two decades have generated concern, provoked reflection, and evoked planning of confrontation actions on the part of organizations working in the defense of human rights and environmental. This is because they are mutations, in the context of different countries, in the form of reactions to advances and achievements in the field of the rights of workers, women and social minorities, followed by setbacks and political obstacles of different orders.

The research “Fundamentalisms, the crisis of democracy and threat to human rights in South America: trends and challenges for action” is an initiative of the ACT Alliance South American Ecu-
menical Forum (FESUR). The project was born out of the concern of churches and faith-based orga-
nizations (OBFs), articulated through ACT Alliance, with these changes observed on the continent,
evaluated as reflections of different expressions of fundamentalism.

These concerns were indicated at the Global Conference on Latin America and the Caribbean, (Guatemala 27-29 March 2019) with members of the ACT Alliance Forums from Brazil, Argentina, Peru, and Colombia. The evident political crises, the deepening of inequalities, the reduction of spaces for civil society participation, the increase in the assassination of human rights defenders, and the consequent weakening of democracies were highlighted. An effective fundamentalist agenda was recognized in the region, with great economic and political capital, the results of its religious capital, which has succeeded in hindering rights won by women and the LGBTBI+ community, confronting national judicial systems, influencing and, in some cases, destabilizing democracies.

Since the 1970s, with the Iranian (Islamic) revolution, the attacks of September 11, 2001 and the entry into the 21st century, with the new outlines of the relationship between Christians and politics in Latin America, the notion of “fundamentalism” has been resignified. The origin of the term goes back to the ultraconservative tendency of a Protestant segment of the United States, at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, rooted in the literal interpretation of the Bible, classified as inerrant, in reaction to modernity (embodied in liberal theology and biblical study contextual mediation of hu-
man and social sciences), in defense of the immutable foundations of the Christian faith. Since then, the fundamentalist perspective has been changing, within evangelicalism itself, and has crossed the borders of religion. It becomes a matrix of thought, a posture, anchored in the defense of a truth and in imposing it on society.

It is a fact that, in the last decades, religious and non-religious groups have appeared in the public space, in different contexts of the world, with actions that can be classified as “fundamentalist”, characterized as reactive and reactionary to social changes. In this sense, it is observed that funda-
mentalism becomes a social phenomenon that goes beyond the religious dimension, gains a more diversified profile, and acquires a political, economic, environmental, and cultural character. In these actions, certain “foundations” are chosen to persuade society in order to establish borders and fight against “enemies,” which often results in a polarizing and separatist movement, which denies dia-
logue and democracy and establishes a single thought that aims to direct actions in public space.

The most emblematic case in the contemporary period in South America is Brazil, due to the election of the extreme-right military officer Jair Bolsonaro to the Presidency of the Republic (2018), resulting from an intense reactionary process to advances in the field of social, sexual and reproduc-

tive rights. However, it is observed that in Colombia, Peru, and Argentina, countries prioritized in the FESUR research initiative, together with Brazil, some processes denote simulated situations, in very close periods, indicating a kind of fundamentalist pattern of intervention in democracies and human rights actions on the continent. In 2020, with the Covid-19 pandemic, this situation was aggravated and this whole situation became evident. The cases described below provide an overview of these processes.

Argentina 2018



The “National Campaign for Legal, Safe and Free Abortion,” launched in 2013 by women’s movements, with the motto “Sex education to decide, contraceptives not to abort, legal abortion not to die,” takes the form of a bill in 2018. It was the result of an emergence process of diverse groups of the civil society, among them feminist movements, and for sexual diversity, after hard years of the last military dictatorship (1976-1983). At the same time, so-called “pro-life” groups were established, whose objective is the affirmation of life from conception, with opposition to sexual and reproductive rights agendas.

During the presidency of Carlos Menem, in the 1990s, responsible for the implementation of neoliberal policies in the country, there was the strengthening of “pro-life” campaigns on the part of the executive branch, with the support of the Supreme Court of Justice, which acted in the approval of actions lawsuits related to contraception restrictions.

The opening in the field of social and sexual rights arrived in the 2000s. Argentina went on to live 12 years under the Nelson and Cristina Kirchner governments (2003-2015), identified as “progressive” due to the expansion of social rights, in particular, of workers, and broader taxes on the rich agrarian sector.

It was in the Kirchner years that same-sex marriage in the country became law (2010), transvestites and transsexuals choosing their sex in the civil registry and rectifying their Christian name and identity photo by law (2012). Comprehensive sexuality education and sexual health and responsible procreation laws were also passed.

The issue of violence against women also became an issue in Argentina during this period, especially with the Ni Una Menos [None a less] March, convened by a group of women after the femicide of the pregnant teenage girl Chiara Páez, 14 years old, and four other women. The march gathered thousands of women in front of the National Congress, and also took place in Chile and Uruguay on June 3, 2015. In Argentina, the movement, called by social media, received support from the press, different public figures, and large parts of the population. The proposal was to give visibility to the issue of violence against women, and to protest against the alarming number of women killed, to demand instruments that would guarantee the protection of victims and greater discussion on the subject through educational strategies for all levels of education (Ni Una Menos, https://www.facebook.com/NUMArgentina/about/?ref=page_internal).

Although the neoliberal government of Mauricio Macri took over the country in 2016, the debate over legal abortion was taken over by the National Congress. The House of Representatives approved the bill in 2018, but two months later, the more conservative part of the Senate disapproved.

This process was the trigger for an intense counteroffensive by the “pro-life” movements in Argentina, with surprising force, and repercussion into other areas of public life. Actions were taken against what was called “gender ideology”, whose objective, it is believed, would be to indoctrinate children, adolescents, and young people, to assimilate feminism and the “gay dictatorship”, and sex education in schools. Conservative Christian, Catholic and Evangelical groups, until then marginally positioned in the political arena, through articulations with existing political parties, gain visibility. The campaign “Don’t mess with my Children” was launched, which already existing in other Latin American countries. Several pro-life parties were also organized and articulated to the NOS Front, in “defense of the family and against the ‘gender ideology’”, for the 2019 presidential elections. Networks related to the educational area and

However, the failure of the new application of neoliberal policies by the Macri government has generated intense reactions in Argentine society. In 2019, the year of elections for the presidency of the Republic and the renewal of part of Congress, social movements carried out broad protests to demand that the president declare a food emergency to combat poverty. The Catholic Church reinforced the request. Congress unanimously approved an emergency food bill to allow greater resources for social programs. Argentina’s poverty increased from 32.0% to 35.4% in the first half of 2019, the highest level since the dense economic crisis in 2001. Macri was not re-elected, and pro-life parties and fronts did not achieve electoral success (Maximiliano Campana, interview). The context made it possible for Alberto Fernandez, of the Left “Frente para Todos”, to win, with Cristina Kirchner on the ticket as vice president.

the judiciary were established and manifested themselves publicly, giving a lay character to the anti-gender actions.

This advance of the conservative anti-sexual and reproductive rights agenda took place in the social and political arena with space for amplification in traditional and digital media by intense occupation of activist groups (Chaher, Florentín, Gabioud, 2020).





Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff is impeached and removed from office in her second term. It would be the 14th year of a progressive government in Brazil's major power, that began in 2003 with the election of the leader of the Workers' Party (PT), the worker Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. A government program was implemented with an emphasis on human rights, especially of women, of LGBTQI+, of traditional communities (indigenous and quilombolas), after more than ten years of governments of neo-liberal policies with weakening social rights.

Sexual and reproductive rights have made slow progress in the face of the strength of conservatism fuelled by Catholicism and the strength of evangelical segments in national politics since 1986, but which over the mandates of Lula and Dilma have become more significant in comparison with previous decades. Achievements in the field of gender rights were being achieved by lawsuits since conservative pressures in the legislative power are intense. Advances related to the process of social inclusion of social minorities and poverty reduction were also achieved.

Dilma Rousseff's re-election in 2014, despite a broad campaign against the PT, and accusations of corruption in the Lula administration by Judiciary's agents, generated strong articulation among conservative parties, businessmen, ruralists, financial system characters, with the support of Vice President Michel Temer, and his Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB) party.

That year, conservative Catholic and evangelical groups, with the support of related political leaders, prevented the National Education Plan, discussed in the National Congress, and

the resulting State and Municipal Plans, from including the notion of gender as a transversal subject. The opposition campaign was based on what was called "gender ideology", to impose feminism and the "gay dictatorship". The "School Without a Party" movement (created in 2003) gained momentum during the same period, with the propose of "freeing students from political and ideological groups and currents that act upon the teaching of schools (Marxist and gender)" (Corrêa, Kalil, 2020).

Operation Car Wash of the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office, launched in 2014, which accused the PT and party leaders of embezzling funds from the state oil company Petrobrás, was led by a prosecutor who publicly identified himself by his evangelical faith, having visited churches and gathered religious groups for lectures on corruption in a messianic atmosphere. In this context, there were complaints from jurists about the use of legal instruments on the part of this Judiciary's body, as a parallel power, for purposes of political persecution, destruction of the public image and disqualification of a political adversary, in this case, the PT and its leaders, especially former President Lula, a process called "lawfare".

An impeachment process for Dilma Rousseff was articulated and ended the almost 14 years of social-liberalism conducted by the PT and its allied base. There followed a set of setbacks in the field of human rights, gender and labor in Brazil in the following two years, and paved the way for the election of the extreme right to the presidency of the Republic, in the figure of the military Jair Bolsonaro, in 2018.

Bolsonaro's electoral campaign was marked by the emphases of "salvation of the Traditional Family", against corruption, and was fuelled by a broad and articulate occupation of social media with the dissemination of false content by its network of supporters. Jair Bolsonaro built the image of an anti-gender and anti-communist religious government (Corrêa, Kalil, 2020). In the context of the campaign, in which PT presented Lula's candidacy for a new term, the process of investigating Operation Car Wash against the former president was accelerated, which resulted in his arrest in April 2018.

Although maintaining his Catholic identity, the president of Brazil makes explicit the religious alliance with conservative evangelical leaders within and outside institutional politics and has six evangelicals among his ministers (among them the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights). There is an explicit agenda that updates neoliberal policies, with denial of human rights, especially the rights of workers, women, LGBTQI+, and traditional communities (indigenous and Afro-Latin). The practice of destabilizing social and opposition movements with disinformation is a hallmark of the government.

The failure to implement public policies under the Bolsonaro government was compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic and a tense social climate was created.



marcoagvisconti

Colômbia 2016



In 2016, a legislative proposal to decriminalize abortion was submitted to the Colombian House of Representatives. The partial decriminalization had been approved ten years earlier, in 2006. The proposal to expand the law gave rise to “pro-life”, anti-gender movements and associations in the country, and against the reproductive rights agenda, based on combating what was called “gender ideology,” with the denial of rights to the LGBTQI+ population. These agendas were publicly led by Catholics and Evangelicals, but various lay and academic productions have also emerged in defense of these subjects. The presence of pro-life activists and Catholic faithful in important positions of the State is now observed, as was the case with the appointment of the Attorney General of the Nation, the conservative Catholic Alejandro Ordoñez.

It was during the two terms of President Álvaro Uribe (2002-2009) that the greatest advances occurred in the field of sexual and reproductive rights. A national policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health was created in 2003, several international agreements were established in the field of gender rights, and many of them have been incorporated into the Constitution, culminating in the partial decriminalization of abortion. In 2007, homosexual unions were legally recognized (Hernandes, 2020).

Álvaro Uribe's government was marked by the hard-line confrontation of the violence experienced in the country for more than four decades by the action of guerrillas and drug trafficking. Uribe instigated a political messianism, to combat a public enemy—the guerrilla—and proclaimed that without it the country would



drift. The success of this policy even led him to try to remain in power longer and not having succeeded (Carlos Angaritta, interview).

The height of disputes over gender rights in Colombia took place in 2016. That year egalitarian marriage (homosexual union) was approved, after several years in “legal limbo” (Hernandes, 2020). The adoption of children by same-sex couples had been approved in 2015, with high reaction from conservative groups.

In August 2016, there were massive marches by anti-gender groups in different cities, motivated against the production of sex education booklets in primary and secondary education, and in opposition to the Education Minister, who ended up resigning her position. The marches, promoted by Catholics and Evangelicals, were fed by various fake news, which circulated in the social media during the period, against “gay pornographic material”.

A month later, the Colombian government signed a peace agreement with the FARC-EP, the oldest armed left-wing group in Latin America (since 1964), after four years of negotiations, on the opposite path to the Uribe government’s hard-line actions. The idea of holding a plebiscite to back the peace agreements led to a negative result, to the “No”, and it was a serious blow to the peace process in Colombia. The “No” to the peace agreement was strongly strengthened by the fact that the gender and sexual diversity perspective was a structural part of the peace agreement. The case of the booklets reinforced the rejection of the peace agreement, classified by some movements as “homosexual colonization”. Evangelical leaders were prominent in the “No” campaign, but Catholic sectors also played an important role in the process. (Hernandes, 2020).

The Christianization of the political agenda became a highlight in Colombia, especially on the part of Pentecostal evangelicals, with progress in the occupation of parties and some electoral victories for the Senate and the House of Representatives in 2018, forming a religious bench in Parliament.

After the 2018 presidential elections, which gave the victory to the right-wing candidate Ivan Duque Marques, the anti-gender offen-

sives went down as their supporters were successful in the elections. Discussions on religious freedom enter the political agenda, intending to expand confessional political participation, and possible interference in the agendas of rights. In 2017 a Commission was opened for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence, and Non-repetition. In 2018, Ivan Duque appointed the former Attorney General of the Nation Alejandro Ordoñez as Ambassador of Colombia in the Organization of American States (OAS), where groups that oppose gender rights have been acting strongly.

The first year of Ivan Duque Marques’ presidency, in 2019, was the target of much criticism. There were several protest marches for corruption in the government and inaction due to the high rate of murders of social activists. The failure to implement the peace process and the consequences of the new neoliberal economic project in Colombia have increased popular indignation. The general strike took place in four moments, between November 2019 and January 2020, with several peaceful public demonstrations. According to the country’s media report, police repression has resulted in three deaths, hundreds of injured and arrested (Univision y Agencias, 2019). In December 2019, President Duke established a negotiating table with the National Strike Committee, which he called “Great National Conversation,” until March 2020, but brought forward the commitment to carry out a tax reform project, an increase in the minimum wage and changes in educational credit policies. Covid-19 changed this whole picture (Sônia Larotta, interview).



Peru 2016



In Peru, the first massive and significant march of women entitled *Ni una Menos* [None a less] is held, following the trail of the marches started in 2015 in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, making public the deep and widespread malaise of the population before a recurring situation: violence against women and femicides in the country. Promoted by feminist organizations, the support to the march was spontaneous and surprising, with the majority participation of women, and national reach, having been carried out simultaneously in most regions of the country. This movement took place in the wake of the series of demonstrations and achievements of feminist and LGBTQI+ movements for gender justice, spread throughout the Latin American continent.

After the 1990s, under the dictatorship with Alberto Fujimori's neoliberal policies, armed terrorist actions and intense violence against women (forced sterilization among other practices) (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación de Perú, <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/lacomision/nlabor/index.php>), the country experienced, in the years 2000, under the presidencies of Alejandro Toledo and Alan García, economic growth with the deepening of neoliberalism. From the reaction of the most impoverished population was elected President Ollanta Humala (2011-2016).

Humala disappointed his supporters, being considered a traitor by social movements and part of the political left that gave him electoral support (Minowa, 2016). His successor, former Wall Street banker Pedro Pablo Kuczynski (PPK), was elected in 2016 to a center-right government, with the support of elites and businessmen.

Even within the conservative background that prevailed in the country, with gender rights conquered with intensely slow steps, in 2013 the Congress of the Republic passed a law that prohibits all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. That same year, Congress debated a bill to approve the homosexual civil union. The Roman Catholic Church and the bench of religious parliamentarians, formed primarily by evangelicals, strongly opposed it, and the project never advanced for approval. In 2014, the only type of legal abortion in the country was regulated, therapeutic abortion, which had been legalized 90 years earlier in 1924, and which should guarantee the highest standards of health for women and girls, following Peru's international obligations. However, there are still barriers to its implementation.

In 2016, President PPK's Ministry of Education implemented a reform of the National Curriculum from basic education and introduced notions of equality and gender identity. It also sought to strengthen sex education in the face of teenage pregnancy, which leads girls to drop out of school. The insertion of these notions in the Peruvian educational policy followed the cycle of opening to gender issues, with votes in Congress and the intensification of social movements for gender justice, evidenced by the "*Ni una a Menos*" march that year.

Opposition mobilizations began to take shape in November 2016, led by conservative groups and religious organizations (Pina, 2017). From this movement was born the campaign "*Con mis Hijos no te Metas*" [Don't mess with my Children] (CMHNTM), launched in Decem-



Jerzy Andrzej Kucia

ber 2016 in social media, with a clear position against the “gender ideology” in the Basic Education curriculum for that was believed in “it would stimulate children to change their sex”. The campaign, strongly marked by false alarmist content in social media, provoked a national debate on gender and education, and had strong support from conservative groups, especially among Catholics and Evangelicals, but also powerful politicians, and took over the streets with large demonstrations. Legal action against the new curriculum was brought to the court. At the end of 2016, the minister of education was removed from office.

Because of pressure from street mobilizations, in 2017 Peru’s Supreme Court annulled the focus on gender equality in the school curriculum. The materials had also been the target of a popular action that was spearhead by the Coletivo Padres en Acción [Fathers in Action]. Education Minister Marilú Martens, with less than a year in office, was overthrown. As a consequence, ecclesial movements brought to the court a lawsuit against sex education in schools, for it to happen at home. However, in April 2019, the Supreme Court of Justice rejected the demand of the Collective Fathers in Action, repealed previous judicial decisions that favored their claims.

This whole process led to the intensification of conservative forces in Peruvian politics for moral bias (José Luis Péres Guadalupe, interview). Conservative Catholic and Evangelical

sectors join to “pro-life” and anti-gender parliamentarians, with pro-family, and anti-ideology gender discourse. The CMHNTM campaign has begun to move forward in opposition to other subjects and groups defending gender causes.

In 2018, accusations of corruption led to the resignation of President PPK in March of that year and he was replaced by Vice President Martín Vizcarra, who experienced a crisis with Congress, which opposed him in 2019. The numerous corruption scandals and high levels of uncertainty in the face of economic stagnation make it easy to understand why Peru is the Latin American country that mistrusts its Congress the most, and the third with the greatest distrust about the party system and the judiciary (Colonel, 2019).

New elections to Congress, called by the President, were held in January 2020. Several parties presented their moral agenda in the campaign, but lost votes and did not put representatives in Congress. The moral agenda was not strengthened as a political agenda. In the popular view, yes, there is the welcome, but in the broader political field it is not (Rocio Palomino Bonilla, focus group; José Luis Péres Guadalupe, interview). The strong agenda becomes the territories’ rights on the part of indigenous communities and afro-descendants (Rolando Pérez, interview).

Elements in common

There are elements in common that stand out in the preliminary observation of these cases:

1) - An intense reactionary expression to social advances that responded to Human Rights and the search for social equality (of class, in income distribution, race and ethnicity, gender).

2) - Gender as a prominent element in the reaction: in Argentina, the legislation on voluntary termination of pregnancy; in Colombia, the issue of gender ideology in the Peace Agreement and the case of the primers about gender perspective; in Brazil, the opposition to the notion of gender as a transversal term in public education plans and weakening of public policies for women and LGBTQI+; in Peru, the issue of gender in curriculum and sex education in schools. Pro-life and anti-gender agendas for “traditional family salvation” permeate all reaction;

3) - A clear religious matrix is present in the reaction, supported by conservative non-religious sectors: the religion used to legitimize the capitalist political and economic project (Catholic and evangelical religious base, in a “corporate union” or “opportunistic”) with the rhetoric of moral panic based on fear and the rich use of disinformation, especially fake news, with language that generates popular identification with reactionary agendas;

4) - Pro-family and anti-gender agendas developed through two fronts: Education and Law (Judiciary)–two political paths to occupy societies;

5) - The neoliberal model as the foundation of economic policy, anchored in the notion of the minimum state to facilitate any initiative for what the market should be the protagonist of what should be public policies;

6) - Crisis of the neoliberal model, in process for some years, potentiated with the coronavirus pandemic of 2020.



The FESUR Research

Based on the observation of this reality, FESUR is concerned with reflecting how the advance of fundamentalisms is manifested in South America, to evaluate its practices and make them more effective in responding to this social phenomenon. For this reason, the research sought to systematically describe the pattern developed by different fundamentalisms in four South American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru) to understand, through the description of specific cases, the trends in this phenomenon in the region. At the same time, we tried to identify strategies to respond actively to the phenomenon of fundamentalisms in the region, which can be shared between OBFs and churches linked to the ACT Alliance. Based on these objectives, the research was based on the hypothesis that

There is a pattern of systematic action developed by different fundamentalisms, the result of a strategy that threatens and seeks to control the democracies of South American countries. This pattern of action directly affects the exercise of rights defenders, challenges the responses developed by the OBFs and churches linked to the ACT Alliance, and reduces the environment or space for civil society in the region.

In this sense, the following methodological path has been constructed:

1. Reading and systematization of recent and qualified bibliography concerning the conceptualization of the fundamentalism's notion, its expressions in Latin America, and the socio-political context in which the possible pattern of systematic action is carried out (the bibliographic research is at the end of this text).

2. In-depth (semi-structured) interviews with experts nominated by FERSUR organizations in prioritized countries (academics who carry out studies related to the subject of fundamentalisms in political and economic forms of opposition to gender, environmental and religious justice) conducted individually, through electronic platforms, to collect conceptual and analytical contributions. Each specialist was questioned in a specific area related to their studies and research on fundamentalisms: politics, economics, gender, environment, religion.

The list of interviewees from each country with their profiles is at the end of this text. Twenty-one experts were interviewed: four from Argentina; six from Brazil; six from Colombia; and five from Peru.

3- Focus groups and group interviews with leaders and activists (related to ACT Alliance organizations in prioritized countries and the contacts and articulations of FESUR organizations) to collect contributions on the experiences, i.e., the trends of fundamentalisms in the region, their discourses, and practices, and to identify systematic practices that respond to the processes, and strategies of opposition to fundamentalisms. The two-hour meeting was held on a virtual electronic platform, with the participation of six to eight people (minimum average for a focus group), leaders of the OBF and churches linked to the ACT Alliance and also people interested/involved in the subject, invited by FESUR organizations in the countries prioritized, from their contacts and articulations.

The list of seven focus groups from each country and two group interviews, with the profiles of the participants, is at the end of this text. 47 activists participated in the nine groups.

4. Research Seminars with the Research Group Communication and Religion of the Brazilian Society of Interdisciplinary Communication Studies (INTERCOM), which is part of the Media, Religion, and Culture Study Group (MIRE), under the coordination of the researcher responsible for this text. Two virtual research seminars were held—one after the process of reading the reference bibliography (with 54 participants) and the other after the interviews and focus groups (with eight par-

ticipants). They were a space for the responsible researcher to talk to specialists in the study of religion, and culture and offered contributions to the writing of this text.

5. International Seminar Fundamentalisms, Democracy and Human Rights held by FESUR, in its configuration process, from August 19 to 21, 2020. With the participation of 60 guests from organizations linked and related to ACT Latin America and the Caribbean and partners from the United States, Germany and Sweden, for the presentation of the FESUR research report and indications indications with a view to the refinement of this text, in particular, regarding the deepening of the “Possible response strategies”.

The application of this methodology has led to the results presented in the three parts of this text. They follow the subjects which make up the objectives and the hypothesis of the research work plan:

1. Fundamentalisms as a religious-political phenomenon in South America
2. Fundamentalist trends in the region
3. Possible response strategies



1 Fundamentalisms as a religious-political phenomenon in Latin America

1.1 A fertile ground for the emergence of fundamentalism

The cases described in the introduction of this text indicate that South America is facing a religious-political phenomenon, which Jürgen Habermas already observed in the early 2000s in the United States and calls “political revitalization of religion”. It represents the downfall of the modern Enlightenment idea that secularization would privatize religion, definitively eliminating it from the public sphere (Habermas, 2007). Habermas calls this political revitalization of religion “post-secularization” (Habermas, Ratzinger, 2007), a phenomenon in which societies are characterized by the constant presence of religion in the public sphere, despite the process of social and cultural modernization they have experienced. This phenomenon is the result of a discourse on the sacred that preserves the motivational aspect of its religious contents and contributes to the maintenance of social integration, achieved not only through the normative dimension of the democratic constitutional state of liberal law.

Joanildo Burity (2016) treats this dimension from the notion of “public religion”. It does not just mean that religion, in contemporary times, “occupies the public space”, projecting itself beyond the private frontier, through personal and collective experience, informal and institutionalized religious practices. The process goes beyond this: religion becomes a collective action, in the public space, as culture and as a discourse on values. Hence it became a public religion.

Although the Catholic presence in politics is a historical mark of Latin America, it was the entrance of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal Protestantism, the popularly called “Evangelicals”, into the electoral institutional politics of several countries, more intensely from the 1980s, which drew attention to this phenome-

non, with emphasis on the Pentecostal groups. This presence in the political arena has been, more recently, also in non-institutional politics (activism by public agendas) and has paved the way for a significant participation of leaders of historical Protestantism.

The reference to “evangelicals” in Latin America, in general, currently comprehends all non-Catholic and Orthodox Christians in a single group, when one takes into account the presence of these religious groups in the public sphere, evidently concerning numerical growth, presence in politics, cultural movements. However, the complexity of studies concerning evangelicals in Latin America, due to the multiplicity of denominations that make up this religious field today, has led scholars to try to elaborate typologies that are themselves multiple and, undeniably, unsatisfactory. The most common ones identify evangelicals by confessionality, taking into account the myriad of churches, arranged, in a succinct way, as historical (Protestants who settled in the continent in the 19th century) and Pentecostal (established in the continent from the beginning of the 20th century). In the group of Pentecostals are the so-called “Neopentecostals”, groups related to new religious movements of the late 20th century, identified by the preaching of the search for material prosperity, divine healing and exorcism practices. (See Guadalupe, Grundberger, 2019). It is worth highlighting a study by Brazilian sociologist Alexandre Brasil Fonseca that proposes a new typology based on the discourses (theological and ideological formation) that generate affinities that go beyond confessional boundaries. In this classification the evangelicals of Brazil could be identified as: Pentecostal, Independent, Undefined, Reformed, Ecumenical, of the Integral Mission, of Prosperity (FONSECA, 2019).

The presence of evangelicals in public space in Latin America dates back to other decades and to the **ecumenical, progressive perspective**, which had as references the Social Gospel, Practical Christianity, and the theological seeds that gave rise to Liberation Theology. It is remarkable The Church and Society movement in Latin America (ISAL), which combined the “biblical theology of redemption from a historical perspective with a call to active militancy in social and political liberation movements” (Miguel Bonino, 2003 p. 25-26).

These basis fed several Protestant churches and ecumenical groups, in their many projects of social intervention, including the dialogue with Roman Catholics. However, they were repressed by conservative political movements inside and outside the churches, some that took the form of military dictatorships in several countries on the Continent. Many Protestant and ecumenical Catholic leaders were arrested, tortured, missing, killed, as a result of this active Christian militancy.

Despite the great repression of military dictatorships in the region and the extinction of several of these ecumenical groups, some organizations managed to survive and formed an important link in the 1980s with the creation of the Latin American Council of Churches, national councils of churches and numerous ecumenical service organizations. For the Catholic Church, this was the time of consolidation of Liberation Theology and the flourishing of the Basic Ecclesial Communities and the social pastorals, the fruit of the post-Vatican II Episcopal Conferences of Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979), with the intense promotion of the relationship between faith and politics, with broad ecumenical dialogue.

The 1980s were also the time of the surge of **neo-Pentecostalism** in the continent and its extensive number of denominations. In this context, the Latin American evangelicals leave the condition of an invisible minority for a publicized visibility, through a close relationship with the media and political participation.

This more intense interaction of evangelical groups in the public space occurs during the period of introduction of neoliberal policies in the continent, with theologies that support them. The success of the “**Prosperity**” and “**Spiritual War**” theologies can be explained by their integration with the conjuncture of neoliberal society.

They are the basis of neoliberal policies: total openness to the world market, without restrictions (imports and exports) and stimulus to consumption; investments in technological apparatus, especially in the field of computerization; elimination of the presence of the State in the economy, reducing, to the most maximum, the number of state-owned companies, favoring private initiative in all social segments. (See Villagra, 2015).

In the logic of exclusion, which now characterizes society, it is preached that those who wish to be included could adhere to the promises of material prosperity (“Life in the Blessing”), being faithful to God materially and spiritually. In this case, the winners of the great social competition for a space in the system would be the “chosen of God” and the accumulation of material goods, interpreted as the blessings for the “sons of the King” (or “Princes”). In the same direction, it is preached that it is necessary to “destroy the evil” that prevents society from achieving the blessings of prosperity, so the “sons of the King” must invoke all the power that is rightfully theirs to establish a war against the “powers of evil” represented, in the evangelical imagination, mainly by the Roman Catholic Church, the religions of original peoples and African tradition, the feminist movements and LGBTQI+ (Guadalupe, Grundberger, 2019).

A third theological form relates to these two, the **Dominion Theology**. Also classified as “**Reconstructionism**”, a logic built by fundamentalists of the United States in the 1970s, is the quest for the reconstruction of the theocracy in contemporary society, in the fulfillment of the Christians’ predestination to occupy command’s positions in the world (presidencies, ministries, parliaments, state, provincial, municipal, supreme courts)–the Christian religious dominion–to influence public life. Reconstructionists assimilate the theology of prosperity and spiritual warfare into their bases, in support of the neo-liberal economic and political system, with the offering of a religious foundation and a Christian cosmovision, to sustain the conquest of power by evangelical religious leaders (Guadalupe, Grundberger, 2019).

The influence of this Pentecostal force in the South American religious field has been especially concrete in strengthening the groups called “revivalists” or “charismatic revival” in the historical churches. They have similar proposals and postures with Pentecostalism and began to conquer important spaces in the religious practice of the historical Protestant churches so that they would recover or achieve some numerical growth, assimilating the three predominant theologies described above. For some ecumenical churches of progressive doctrine, this adjustment meant a retrograde step in what represented their presence in public space (Cunha, 2012).

In this context, Catholic hegemony on the continent has also transformed. Although it prevailed in numerical terms, in geographical distribution and authority before the socio-political and cultural reality of Latin America, Catholicism was weakened.



With the growth and occupation of the public space of evangelicals, the Roman Catholic Church is experiencing a fall in the number of faithful and a loss of space for socio-political influence (Guadalupe, Grundberger, 2019).

At the same time, the late 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s were a period of imposition of conservatism by Pope John Paul II, in his offensive against Liberation Theology, accused of being a Marxist deflection. John Paul II's successor, Benedict XVI, the German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, his right arm in imposing the conservative wave in the Catholic Church, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, responsible for various processes of censorship of liberation theologians, spent only eight years in the Papacy (2005-2013). However, this period was sufficient to consolidate the offensive against the Latin American Liberation Theology (Benedict XVI..., 2013). The foci of opposition to the conciliatory pontificate of Pope Francis (2013 to the present) on all continents, particularly in Latin America, are strongly due to this conservative legacy of past pontificates.

About the fertile ground for fundamentalist expressions in South America, it is also important to go back in history and recall two events that deeply mark the socio-political and cultural reality of the countries: the colonialism of Spain and Portugal in the 16th century and the military dictatorships (National Truth Commission, Brazil <http://cnv.memoriasreveladas.gov.br/>). In this regard, it is important to point out that "democracy" is not the rule in South America, which is always shown as intervals of the predominance of authoritarian governments. This stems from the structure of society established in Latin America, based on three forces imposed by colonialism: patriarchalism, latifundia, and slavery, embodied in the authority of the white man, great property, and racism. The Brazilian anthropologist Gilberto Freyre (2003) explains that the patriarchal formation of Brazil (and, by extension, of South America because of the same type of colonization, the Iberian) is explained more by its economic foundation, the experience of culture and organization of the family, which was the colonizing unit. According to Freyre, the feudal lords were the owners of the land, the owners of the men, the owners of the women. This established a culture based on patriarchal solidity: the stability of white men supported by the plantations of latifundios and blacks.

These forces compound the different South American social formations by establishing social concreteness, ideologies, and behaviors (Isabel Del Pilar López Meza, focus group; Lyndon dos Santos, interview). They are the bases of authoritarian regimes anchored in machismo, racism, and militarism that hang like a shadow in the politics of several countries. They mark the reality of the continent, at various historical moments, and the tensions that permeate contemporary democratic construction, as in the cases described in this text, which evidence how human rights are not fully experienced by the people.

Highlighting this authoritarian colonial structure is also important to understand the parallel powers and armed violence that mark the life on the continent. At this point, the criminal nature of state security forces, inter-ethnic conflicts, and the "social cleansing" of marginal populations interconnect. Between 1960 and 1980, state terrorism of dictatorships and opposition terrorism were the main characteristics of organized violence. With democratic transitions since the 1980s, elected governments were expected to restore the rule of law. However, so many decades later, the violence that emerges from a variety of "armed actors" (irregular militias, drug trafficking mafias, organized crime in the cities and countryside, and paramilitary forces) continues to interfere in the social and political life of much of the region. Studies point to aggravating factors such as the impunity granted to those responsible for serious human rights violations; the large number of people accustomed to violence during long periods of internal conflict; the easy availability of weapons; judicial systems saturated and politically manipulated; and overcrowding in prisons (Manrique, 2006). Moreover, this whole situation in which the State does not guarantee rights, especially to the impoverished populations of the cities and countryside, and to the traditional populations of indigenous people and afro-descendants, facilitates the practices of populism, patronage, and corruption throughout the continent.

At this point, the FESUR research follows the reflection of the Gender and Politics in Latin America project, of the Observatory on Sexuality and Politics, of the Global Forum on Sexuality Policy Watch (SPW) (2020). In its case studies in Latin America, SPW recovers the term coined by American philosopher and political theorist Wendy Brown, “de-democratization”, to understand this context in which setbacks in the realization of human rights take place (Brown, 2006; Brown, 2019). In her studies, Brown identifies a process of de-democratization in the United States, a gradual tear of the democratic fabric, triggered by the “War on terror” after 11 September 2001, and the growing interference of religious conservatism in public policy. The researcher attributes to de-democratization as an effect that combines neoliberalism with repoliticization of the religious field (the political revitalization of religion, referred to by Jürgen Habermas cited above in this text).

As far as neoliberalism is concerned, Wendy Brown identifies a first effect of the “omnipresent” neoliberal economy of the 21st century: to reduce democratic politics to laws and institutions and to reduce the social rights mark to property and voting rights. The researcher evaluates that this depoliticizes the public sphere and social life, corroding political autonomy and disqualifying the presence and participation of people in political life. This way, neoliberal rationality emphasizes individualism and transforms citizens into consumers and “entrepreneurs” of their economic survival. All this makes the political dimension of life in common to a secondary dimension and produces indifference. By reducing the state to a public manager, this system facilitates and legitimizes forms of political power exercises that are anti-democratic and gain neo-fascist airs, fed by racism, xenophobia, and machismo. The cases of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru described in this text clearly illustrate this reality.

As for the conservative repoliticization of the religious field, Wendy Brown sees it as an element that complements this process, since religious conservatism acts in the discipline of subjectivities, making them politically submissive to hierarchy and authority, obedient, “patriotic” citizens, which facilitates the imposition

of authoritarian logics of the exercise of power. The researcher also notes that the neoliberal state assumes the logic of pastoral governance, that is, it models the authority of the state in the authority of the Church, establishing a pastoral relationship between the state and “its flock” and concern for unified state power instead of balanced or controlled. The combination of neoliberalism and the repoliticization of the religious field can be identified in the countries prioritized in the research, which supports the emergence of religious-political fundamentalisms in the region.

1.2 The search for a definition

The term “fundamentalism” is not new and is loaded with new meanings according to different historical contexts. Born among Protestant Christians in the United States, it became popular during the Iranian (Islamic) revolution in the late 1970s, which was classified by analysts and news media as fundamentalists in the form of traditional militant religion (Marsden, 1991). Years later, at the dawn of the 21st century, the popularized meaning is resumed, when it began to be used intensively by the news media, all over the world, after the events of September 2001, in the United States, as a classification of the extremely violent actions taken by radical Islamic groups. For that, a negative image of Islam was established, as, practically, synonymous with fundamentalism. The popularization of the term made it equivalent to radicalism, extremism.

With the rise of conservative Pentecostal groups and their presence in politics, from the 1980s in Latin America, the term “fundamentalism” is brought back with force by progressive religious and academic groups studying religion, by the political left-wing and by newsy media analysts. The term is used to classify postures of authoritarianism, intolerance, intransigence, fanaticism, refusal to dialogue, denial of plurality, reconstruction of the moral order, and idealization of what existed in the past, expressed by some leaders of the Pentecostal segment in public space.

At this point, it is important to define the notion because, as one of the participants in the focus groups carried out in the research warned,

“fundamentalism can end up being everything and nothing either” (Dennis Smith, focus group). It is also relevant to conceive of “fundamentalism” in the plural, “because it takes into account the multiple places of enunciation of the phenomenon that manifests itself in South American countries, without losing sight of the religious matrix that feeds it” (Joanildo Burity, interview). In this sense, the research seeks to escape the current uses of the media and common sense with its accusatory connotation to an opponent and affirms the plural perspective of the concept of “fundamentalism”, built from the transformations that the notion has experienced in the various socio-contexts historical data in which it was inserted, which are presented here.

In undertaking an extensive investigation to elaborate his understanding of culture, one of the creators of Cultural Studies, Raymond Williams, used history to assimilate the process of building the term and its transformations. He listed the different uses of the term “culture” in the most varied disciplines and systems of thought. The result of this investigation is disseminated in a significant portion of his work and has become a reference for scholars on culture from different fields of investigation.

Williams’ studies on the term “culture” reaffirm the understanding that concepts are constructed according to the socio-historical context (Williams, 1979). The author indicates the concepts of society, economy, culture, as relatively recent historical formulations.

“Society” was understood as companionship, association, “common achievement”, before it became the description of a general system or order. “Economy”, from the Greek *oikonomia*, meant the form of administration of the house, then it came to have the meaning of the administration of a community, before becoming the description of a certain system of production, distribution and exchange. “Culture”, even before these mentioned transitions, was born from the Latin verb *colere*, related to the growth and care of crops and animals and, by extension, to the growth and care of human faculties until it was understood as the way of life of a social group.

The changes in the term “culture” are due to the articulation with Philosophy and History. They manifest themselves strongly with the Enlightenment, take on another dimension with Romanticism and gain new contours with Marxism. They emerge in new perspectives with the social sciences.

This FESUR research takes this principle defended by Raymond Williams and applies it to the study of fundamentalisms, affirming the plural perspective constructed from the transformations that the notion experienced in the various socio-historical contexts in which it was inserted.

1.2.1 The many transformations of a concept

Protestant origin

Early 20th century: Fundamentalism emerged among conservative Calvinist theologians at the Princeton Theological Seminary at the end of the 19th century and spread in the early 20th century among other Protestant groups in the United States. It arose from the evangelicalism, the fruit of the renewalist movements of the 18th and 19th centuries, classified as the mold of the characteristics of religion in that country (Marsden, 1991). A time of strong socio-cultural and economic changes, with the advance of science, processes of modernization, urbanization, and industrialization, evangelicalism is divided into two wings: liberal, which assumes the humanism that underlies the changes, and establishes the dialogue of theology with the human and social sciences, and the emergence of biblical sciences and liberal theology. The other wing is the conservative one, which reacts strongly to the transformations and the re-reading of tradition.

1910-1915: Publication of the collection of 12 volumes entitled “The fundamentals: a testimony to the truth” (1910-1915), which was edited by Reverend Reuben Anchor Torrey. The collection featured texts on the Bible, in defense of its inerrancy, as well as content critical of modernity, liber-

al theology, modern philosophy, and Roman Catholicism. On these grounds, evangelical Christianity is presented as the true religion and is offered a list of dogmas and doctrines that support this statement. Other topics dealt with are archeology and science, with an emphasis on the fact that the approach is not a denial of the place of these studies, with criticisms introduced when they negatively affect “the fundamentals”. The collection values science as a means of validating the historical facts of the Bible (Marsden, 1991).

These “foundations” are, therefore, a reaction against the values of enlightenment and humanist modernity, which would call into question the centrality of Christianity in Western culture, causing the process of secularization. A common characteristic of this religious position is the divine revelation “as a structuring principle for the organization of society in all its dimensions” (Santos, 2014, p. 38). Having as an anchor the defense of the myth of the western Christian civilization, embodied in the culture of the dominant Protestant countries, the fundamentalism born among evangelicals pleads for true Christianity, refusing ecumenical dialogue, which is evaluated as relativization of the faith.

1920: the term “fundamentalist” is first recorded as the identity of this movement, according to historian Karen Armstrong, at a meeting of the Northern Baptist Convention in 1920 where Pastor Curtis Lee Laws called for the “fundamentalist” identity to be attributed, including himself, to “someone willing to reclaim lost territories for the Antichrist and ‘fight for the foundations of the faith. (Armstrong, 2009, p. 157).

The 1930s: the historical limit of the activities of original fundamentalism, with conservative militants present in all the evangelical denominations. Radicalization caused many of these militants to dissociate themselves from the historical evangelical churches because of their adherence to the ecumenical movement (around the principle of unity in diversity) and its organizations.

The 1960s: “fundamentalists” meant “separatists” and were no longer related to the conservatives of the historical churches, not even the Pentecostals. The exception was the Southern Baptist Convention, which had a large proportion of militant conservatives called “fundamentalists”, especially by its critics (Marsden, 1991).

Internationalization and politicization

Post-World War II: Fundamentalism gains a new signifier, becomes internationalized, and expands across the globe following the expansion of American capitalism. The «American way of life» is exported to the world. “The more capitalism expands the more fundamentalism is broadened. It penetrates Latin American Protestantism and meets the colonialist and authoritarian culture of the dictatorships, gaining the most political character, beyond the religious” (Lyndon dos Santos, interview). At this moment, fundamentalists see themselves as «counter-cultural characters, in a battle for the reconquest of America by family and Christian values, supposedly kidnapped by secular humanism, the communist threat, feminism, and gays. (Karina Bellotti, Research Seminar).

Fundamentalism is opposed in the 1960s to civil rights struggles and protests against the Vietnam War, embraced by large sections of American evangelicals, and creates a certain unease with the relations between fundamentalism and the extreme right, which affected certain theologians aligned with the movement. Until the late 1960s, the fundamentalist segment in the United States remained politically disjointed, establishing links with politics when it was imbued with speeches of anti-communism and patriotism.

The 1970s: a process of recovery of “evangelicalism” begins, as a factor of unity and transition. The term “fundamentalism” takes on new meaning. Heirs of fundamentalism of the early 20th century, prominent figures such as pastors Jerry Falwell, Tim LaHaye, and Pat Robertson, with ample financial resources and access to radio and TV, are organizing to retake America for Jesus. It is the era of televangelists who have a wide presence in Latin America, which is competently developed in the classic work “The electronic church and its impact in Latin America”, by the Catholic theologian Hugo Assmann (1986), as a result of research promoted by the World Association for Christian Communications, Latin America and the Caribbean (WACC / ALC). It is a time of greater political activism with an approach to the Republican Party, formation of pressure groups, lobbies, articulations such as the “Moral Majority”.

Moral Majority

The new Christian right, led by Jerry Falwell, around the pro-life agendas and pro-family—that is, against abortion (legalized in the United States in 1973), by the regulation of the media, with classification indications by age group, against the conquests of the civil rights of women and LGBTQI +. A prominent name in this “reform of fundamentalism” is that of Baptist pastor Billy Graham, with the evangelistic crusades of the Evangelical Alliance that he founded, working in the fight against communism during the cold war period. The Moral Majority became a major political force in the United States and had as its main flags: the defense of “family values” (which included opposition to abortion in any case, combating the expansion of the rights of homosexual people, and also, the restriction on pornography); the return to the practice of prayers and the teaching of creationism in public schools; the fight against the spread of communism together with a fierce patriotic defense of capitalism and the American way of life; an extremely critical stance on social welfare policies; the defense of a pro-Israel stance by the American government; among others (Rocha, 2020). The Moral Majority was strengthened in the 1980s, but it was in the 1990s that it gained more space with Republican President Ronald Reagan. Fundamentalist leaders have been appointed to important positions (Rocha, 2020). This occupation of the Republican Party allowed fundamentalists to be empowered each time the party assumed the highest position in the state. The fundamentalist force is resumed in the Bush years (father and son) and in the present as the Donald Trump administration, evaluated as the extreme right.

The New Christian Right

The 1970s: the term fundamentalism is now associated with narrowness, obscurantism, and sectarianism. The dissemination of this understanding had the contribution of the Oxford University librarian James Barr, in the work *Fundamentalism*, from 1977, in an explicit position of opposition (Alejandro Ribas, interview). In these times, the concept begins to be used, also, in a similar way, to other religions such as Judaism and Islam. One of the common characteristics of this expansion of the use of the term to other religions is antimodernism, which expands with other analyzes for the reaction to a perception of threat or crisis, the dramatization, and mythologization of enemies of the faith, religious idealism, infallibility of the scriptures, extremism, proselytism (Ainz, 2011). Political scientist Gilles Kepel calls this process God’s rematch, a direction opposed to the secularization of the world that, from the 1970s onwards, started to go in reverse (Kepel, 1991).

The contemporary currents of fundamentalism in the United States

Reformism: guided by Francis Schaeffer, who proposed that the transformations would take place in the field of culture and political support for the election of candidates committed to Christian causes, which would make laws consistent with them. In the United States, reformist fundamentalists were not always able to impose an agenda, but what kept them intense and visible, according to Sarah Diamond (1995), was the establishment of culture proper to schools, universities, the press, and the media, which feedback their worldviews. One example is Liberty University, founded by Jerry Falwell in 1971 in Virginia.

Reconstructionism: guided by Gary North, who aligns himself with the idea of occupying party politics, but believes it is not enough. He supports the idea of domination, not opposition to secular institutions, for the Christianization of society. Hence the proposal to act “from below”, of culture, of the basis of social life. For the reconstructionists, education is one of the main battlefields for hearts and minds for long-term transformation. (SILVEIRA, 2017)

Both currents played an important role in the Moral Majority, the New Christian Right of the United States, but reconstructionism was the most influential theological form in politics, through the Dominion Theology, already described in this text. Francis Schaeffer's reformism acts in another direction: instead of investing in party politics or the classic evangelistic crusades, Francis Schaeffer, a young pastor, dedicated himself to working with youth. As a Presbyterian missionary in Switzerland, he created L'Abri (Shelter, in French), an international fraternity for the formation of young people, in 1955 in the Alps. He proposed that Christians enter the “cultural war” and use the cultural institutions of society to transform them. For this reason, he began to stimulate cultural production, especially of films with a religious basis, confronting the humanism to which Schaeffer had aversion and related to abortion. Schaeffer's speech was the basis for several “pro-life” movements (Williams, 2010; Alencar, 2018).

CONTEMPORARY TRENDS OF FUNDAMENTALISM IN THE UNITED STATES



The Roman Catholic fundamentalist bias

For decades, the fundamentalist movements in the United States had already been acting in opposition to the feminist and LGBTQI+ movements. However, in South America, this issue unites religion and politics because of the actions of Catholicism. The process began in the 1990s, in the Vatican, under John Paul II, until the elaboration of “Lexicon–Termini ambigui e discussi su famiglia, vita e questioni etiche” [Lexicón–Ambiguous terms and discussed family, life and ethical issues], in 2003, by the Pontifical Council for the Family, demarcating the church's understanding of sex, gender, and sexuality. It is at this moment that the strategy of the reaction of the Catholic Church to gender rights, promoted by the IV World Conference on Women, promoted by the UN, in Beijing (China, 1995) with the subject “Action for Equality, Development and Peace”, is beginning to be implemented. This strategy enters Latin America in the year 2010 through the notion of gender ideology” and is very attractive to evangelical fundamentalisms. They give more visibility to the fight against “gender ideology” in the support of Catholics (“corporate unity”) and end up leading processes with the consent of Catholic leaders, protected in their public image.

Gender Ideology

A term of the attack on the search for gender rights that was born in the context of the Roman Catholic Church, under the pontificate of John Paul II, especially with the elaboration of “Lexicon–Termini ambigui e discussi su famiglia, vita e questioni etiche” [Lexicón–Ambiguous terms and discussed family, life and ethical issues], in 2003, by the Pontifical Council for the Family, demarcating the church's understanding of sex, gender, and sexuality.

The speech had been made since 2003, with John Paul II, but the Catholic foray was only made explicit in 2008, with Pope Benedict XVI, when, days before Christmas, he made a statement saying: “saving humanity from homosexual or transgender behavior is as important as saving the forests from deforestation”. In this speech, Benedict XVI introduced the idea of “gender” as a “false theory”, soon popularized as “ideology”, in the pejorative connotation of the term (Benedict XVI, 2012).

From this discourse, Catholic leaders aligned with this position began to disseminate the term “gender ideology”, assuming the pejorative meaning of the term “ideology” as a misleading, false thought. In this conception, the “gender ideology” would be materialized in the teaching (via schools and media), especially directed at children and adolescents, that people should choose what to do with their bodies, with the choice of their sexual preference, being encouraged to assume, especially, homosexuality, and the practice of abortion.

Several studies call this movement that emerges from the Catholic Church in the two decades of the 21st century “neo-integrism” (Ramirez, 2020). The term “neo” is used for the understanding that there are structural features similar to those of the integralist Catholic groups in Spain in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (the same period of the emergence of fundamentalism among Protestants in the United States). These groups claimed the central place of the church tradition both in the practices of their faith community and in social and institutional life. A re-foundation of society was sought on Catholic foundations. This movement was decisive for General Franco’s nation project and the imposition of the totalitarian regime of Francoism. In this sense, Catholic fundamentalism was placed as a cultural and political mediation between religious revelation and its historical and social applications (Ramirez, 2020).

These studies establish the Second Vatican Council as a background for the resurgence of integrism as a reaction of the groups opposed to the reforms and “modernization” of the Catholic Church from the conclave. It is evaluated that neo-integrists approach Calvinism in the way of understanding the economic dimension of society and how economic production and moral life can intersect through Christian ethics (Ramirez, 2020).

Opus Dei, Pope John Paul II and his successor Benedict XVI would be expressions of this neo-integralism for scholars of the subject. The opposition to the pontificate of Francis, already mentioned in this text, reflects the strength of this movement within Catholicism throughout the world. It is a search for the resumption

of the religious-political and symbolic power of the Catholic Church, weakened by religious pluralism and socio-political transformations of secular movements, especially those that achieve the rights of social minorities (women, LGBTQI+, black and indigenous populations). These are postures very close to fundamentalisms in the way they are conceived in this FESUR research and are therefore understood here as one of their expressions.

1.2.2 An attempt at definition

The political dimension that these characteristics of fundamentalism assume from the 1970s onwards, beyond the religious, but keeping it in its bases, brings out the understanding that fundamentalism is the search for the ethical-religious state, with the re-establishment of God’s law. From the political point of view, scholars from different areas of the humanities begin to observe that fundamentalism gains expressions in the economy (especially with neoliberalism as the “end of history”) and culture (especially with nationalism, rejection of immigrants and their reactions) (Ainz, 2011).

At this point, this research turns to the sociologist Alexandra Ainz (2011, p. 165) who considers that “fundamentalism consists in very concrete ways, first of interpreting reality [worldview] and then of acting on this interpretation. For this researcher, the interpretation of reality is made from a religious matrix, and action is linked to the political dimension, both being confluent and mutually conditioned.

As it is observed in this reconstitution of the transformations experienced by the term since the beginning of the 20th century, fundamentalist movements and groups are not static, but are continually reinventing themselves from the demands of each socio-historical moment. The religious dimension is maintained with the foundations of faith, based on the Holy Scriptures, from which a model of perfect society springs, superior to any other invented by humans. The political dimension is the concretization, the application of the religious matrix, to social, economic, cultural life. This application can occur, according to Alexandra Ainz, from the most pacifist proselytism to acts of physical violence. In this process, there is a fundamental-

ist rationality that mixes the ends to be achieved (the ethical-religious state) and the values to be defended (resulting from the foundations of the faith), leading fundamentalists to resort to secular principles and laws (such as Human Rights or the Secular State) to justify their demands, which at times take on a strategically secular character (Rogério Junqueira, interview).

This is how fundamentalisms always present themselves as an alternative, as a form of resistance to circumstances or contexts. Therefore, these expressions are reactionary, based on feelings and fears produced by social changes that clash with certain religious values. At this point, it should be noted that fundamentalisms feed on fear. "Human beings are afraid of freedom, they are attached to those who control, to those who erase fears (cf. Eric Fromm). We seek to exorcise guilt and at the same time we seek power to dominate it" (Olga Consuelo Vélez, interview). "It is related to the feeling of powerlessness: the human being feels powerless to carry out life projects. There are other components like creating the image of an enemy, of a threat. The only way to achieve it become to represent the possibility of salvation (religious matrix), the battle for good against evil" (Carlos Angaritta, interview).

The conceptual tension around fundamentalism has produced in certain academic circles the term "neo-fundamentalism," in the understanding that contemporary phenomena are beyond what they call "historical fundamentalism" (Andréa Silveira, Rolando Pérez, interview). In other circles, there is a rejection to the use of the term, in the understanding that what is happening in contemporaneity when it comes to radicalization in public space, postures of intolerance, refusal to dialogue, reconstruction of the moral order and idealization of what existed in the past, the politicization of religious dogmatism, religious extremism, and fanaticism, would not be fundamentalism as the notion was built in the origins. They replace the term with "religio-political conservatism" and "reactionaryism" (Joanildo Burity, Rogério Silveira, William Beltrán, interview; Sonia Correia, focus group).

This record of the FESUR research does not intend to exhaust this subject, since, as seen, the term "fundamentalism" is a concept that is in continuous reconstruction in the face of socio-historical transformations. As a theoretical synthesis, the research assumes the term "fundamentalism" in the plural to understand the political-religious expressions that manifest themselves in the opposite direction of democracy and human rights. **Fundamentalisms (in the plural, therefore) are understood here as a world vision, an interpretation of reality, with a religious matrix, combined with political actions resulting from it, for the weakening of democratic processes and of sexual, reproductive rights and traditional communities, policies of valorisation of plurality and diversity, in mutual conditioning. They are not homogeneous, they are diversified, formed by different groups that have enemies in common to fight with distinct actions in the public space. For this reason, the essential character of fundamentalism is oppositionism.** "In any context, fundamentalism begins to take shape when members of already conservative and traditional movements feel threatened" (Marty, 1992).

It is important to highlight, based on the above, that "conservatism", "integralism" and "traditionalism" are characteristics of fundamentalisms, that is, they manifest themselves in them, and are not their synonyms (Ainz, 2011). Likewise, the concepts of populism, charismatic leadership and messianism are not synonymous with fundamentalism. Fundamentalists may be conservative, integralist, traditionalists, populist, charismatic and messianic, but these would be characteristics that are additional to certain fundamentalist practices and not their synonym.

Also, phenomena that do not have the mutually conditioned religious and political dimensions as well as movements and groups that do not have a fundamentalist rationale activated in the defense of their ideals, should not be considered fundamentalisms (Ainz, 2011). Therefore, when affirming fundamentalism in the plural and relating it to the economy, culture or other socio-political dimensions, it is necessary to apply these criteria.



Wavebreakmedia - elementsenvato

This notion systematizes what experts interviewed and participants in research seminars indicated for the elaboration of this text, and responds to the challenge of overcoming the notion that “everything is fundamentalism resulting in nothing”. From this evaluation, it may be more correct to apply to certain non-fundamentalist socio-political, economic and cultural phenomena the terms “single thought”, “intolerance”, “radicalism”, “extremism”, “fanaticism”.

2 Fundamentalist trends in the region

It is in the Catholic and Evangelical religious seat that the new fundamentalisms are expressed in South America in the year 2000. New forms of fundamentalism, new protagonisms, are observed in the region, which seek a resacralization of society by politics (José Luis Guadalupe, interview). There is the strengthening of the articulation between evangelical political leaders, evangelical media leaders, Catholic and non-religious political leaders, businessmen and ruralists, in tune with the reactionary agendas, forming a conglomerate of leaders that make up a background of reverberation of conservative agendas, with broad support from the electorate. In it, the concept of fundamentalism is transformed in the face of the following expressions.

2.1 Contextualized fundamentalisms

In Latin America, “fundamentalisms have resonance among the lower classes. The peripheries of the continent are among the actions of four groups: evangelical churches, the Catholic Church, popular movements/NGOs, and drug trafficking since there is no intervention from the states. It is not possible to talk about fundamentalism in Latin America without taking these elements into account” (Néstor Oscar Míguez, interview).

Fundamentalist movements propagate expensive issues to the lower classes such as “family protection” and “entrepreneurship so as not to depend on employers”, for example. To understand the progress of fundamentalisms in Latin America, it is necessary to take into account the success of the discourse that reaches the demands/expectations of the lower classes. On the other hand, Pentecostalism does not only reach the poor without formation. There are a Pentecostalism and a neo-Pentecostalism of the middle class, with a speech that calls for what is most elementary to the person (needs and desires, search for happiness, for example) (Andréa Silveira, interview)

In fundamentalist discourses in Latin America, “certain ‘principles’ are chosen for public persuasion to establish borders and fight against ‘enemies’, which always results in a polarizing and separatist movement, which denies dialogue and establishes a single thought that directs actions. Biblical reading is not literal, but it is a reading carried out according to a pre-existing dogmatism” (Néstor Oscar Míguez, interview). This is related to the fact that Pentecostals, protagonists in this process, “have never been fundamentalists, in the sense of literal reading, but are an *ad hoc* way of interpreting the biblical text – they are profoundly distant from the biblical text. They act in convenience to select aspects of the biblical text to justify what they defend, spiritualize them and ignore others” (Joanildo Burity, interview).

In this discourse, one identifies a rejection of certain scientific theories and the adoption of others, a certain moral perspective that takes into account a single biblical social morality, which implies a certain model of traditional heterosexual family, which takes the woman with submission to the man. For this reason, the explicit censorship and stigmatization of all LGBTQI + sexual expression/identity and all sexual expression other than marriage between man and woman. The condemnation of the legalization of abortion and euthanasia is, in this understanding, under the logic that only God can give and take life, and condemns homo-affectivity. Evangelical moral behaviors – no smoking, no drinking, rejecting parties, bars, nightclubs – are added to all of this (William Beltrán, interview).

Besides to these fundamentalist expressions manifesting themselves in the executive and legislative branches, a new element is the scope of the judiciary (a path discovered by the movements to bar and prevent rights, with the support of judges and judicial authorities who are linked or sympathetic to religious groups and/or reactionary movements).

Religious activists, both Catholic and Evangelical, have sought to instruct legislators, judicialize the issue of contraception, the expansion of LGBTQI+ rights, and traditional communities (in the latter case, in alliance with ruralists and mining companies), and foster “conscientious objection. The objective is to encourage qualified faithful to hold positions in the state as politicians, civil servants, prosecutors, and judges to defend their beliefs “for life” in the performance of their duties (Vaggione, 2012). There are examples of this, as already reported, in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru.

This conscientious objection is also encouraged to doctors, nurses, and all employees involved in pregnancy termination procedures, and to officials dealing with the celebration of civil unions, same-sex marriages, or adoption of children by homoparental couples. Vaggione (2012) states that these are clear ways of weakening democracy using the own channels of the democratic system.

2.1.1 The reaction on sexual and reproductive rights

The advances in terms of public policies and laws achieved in South America since the 1980s (a period of re-democratization in several countries of the continent, following the end of dictatorships), concerning the rights of women, especially sexual and reproductive rights, and of LGBTQI+ people, have motivated reactions from religious groups and conservative political sectors in the different countries of the region, as reported in the cases presented in the introduction to this text. This reaction is more intense after the increased demand for gender rights promoted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, promoted by the UN, in Beijing (China, 1995) which the subject was

“Action for Equality, Development, and Peace”.

These reactions were in opposition to policies related to gender rights, especially those related to abortion, sexual diversity. The denial of rights to women and the LGBTQI+ population is an old phenomenon, but the novelty lies in the intensity of the reaction with far-reaching actions and strategies, with a discursive war and the rise of so-called “pro-life” groups (inventoried by the Observatory on Sexuality and Politics in Campana, 2020).

This discursive war is based on the notion of masculinity and femininity, taken from a literal reading of the Bible, which builds the conception of tasks proper to men and women. Fundamentalisms, everywhere in the world, condemn every sexual expression that escapes from this, from the “background established by God”. This is why there are explicit censorship and stigmatization of all LGBTQI+ sexual identity and all sexual expression that is not heterosexual, arising from the marriage between man and woman. The condemnation of the legalization of abortion lies in this understanding, under the logic that only God can give and take life, denying women the right to decide about their bodies. The reproach of euthanasia also comes from this same logic (William Beltrán, interview).

As a strategy, the term “gender ideology” is disseminated, a meta-discourse constructed in such a way as to create abject, to produce rejection, moral panic. Around it, by political means, one perceives a religious matrix acting on the subject of sex education that would cause “perversion of children”, “let’s save our children!” Attached to these ideas is the naturalization of the family ideal and the patriarchal male and female gender. People are now occupying the streets, summoned by the “pro-life” groups (inventoried by the Observatory of Sexuality and Politics in Campana, 2020), against bills that partially or completely legalize abortion, sex education in schools and the notion of gender in education in general and in public policies. Good materials are produced for distribution to the public with references to psychoanalysts (William Beltrán, interview).

There are cases in the region where governments have responded to the demands of these movements, as reported in the introduction to this text. As a result, there is a political climate in South America in which religious-political movements not only have greater strength and political presence but also political leaders who share their ideas are occupying the executive, legislative and judicial branches, implementing actions so that the expectations of these reactionary projects are met.

A prominent example is Brazil. The current president Jair Bolsonaro, in his inauguration speech, promised: “to fight the gender ideology, preserving our values”. One of his first actions, upon taking office, was to extinguish gender, diversity, and inclusion committees, eliminating the LGBTQI+ population as the subject of measures and policies related to human rights. In June 2020, the government appointed a doctor linked to the “pro-life” movement to the Ministry of Health’s Primary Care Secretariat.

2.1.2 The “pro-family” discourse as an economic-political project

The subject of defending the traditional heterosexual family reveals itself as the “tip of the iceberg” of a whole broader economic-political project: keeping things as they are, the status quo, the patriarchal order. The issue of gender is key to fundamentalism because it is connected to different structuring areas of life and knowledge: sexuality, health, economy, culture. The pro-family and anti-gender discourse is marked by the idea of naturalization of a supposed family model (father, mother, and children) and the naturalization of gender (social roles of women and men and heteronormativity). When we speak of the family from the moral point of view, it leads to the element of private production, the destruction of public welfare policies, and a broad and democratic conception of rights. The family, in the patriarchal colonial conception, has a responsibility to procreate, to care for the sick, the elderly, children, and, based on this culture, it is women who exercise reproduction and this care (Rogério Junqueira and Sandra Quintela, interviews).

According to this logic, the family acts as a safety net, a reservoir of discipline, and an authority structure (Brown, 2019). The family is considered a strong barrier to the excesses of democracy and the demands of social minorities. Thus, it is clear that one of the focuses of these fundamentalisms is the destruction of anything that alludes to social justice.

Wendy Brown classifies this morality as resentful, revealing frustrations and the attempt to restart what was once in force, guided by the key to religiosity. It is a white and male resentment of individuals and groups who feel weakened by elements produced by democracy, by the rise in visibility of women and LGBTQI+ in actions for gender rights, because they are confronted when they expose macho, homophobic or racist positions. This resentment is manifested in the rejection, sometimes as hatred, of social associations and organizations (political parties, unions, movements, NGOs) that seek equality, respect for differences and the rights of social minorities, and leaderships that stand out in actions of this nature. The support of these individuals and resented groups to the political-religious fundamentalism inaugurates an anti-democratic culture, against positions and spaces of equality, and proves to be an attempt to make women return to the kitchen, indigenous and black people to the condition of slaves and LGBTQI+ to the reclusion of anonymity.

Therefore, the pro-family and anti-gender discourses, observed in the cases that motivated this research, act through two fronts: Education and Law (judiciary). Both are strongly related to the fundamentalist vision, in that it is configured in the unrestricted adherence to a single model—to a single idea—applied to any place in the world, to any religion and culture worldwide.

“The most successful experience was Chile, in 1973, with the military coup with a neoliberal model: a minimum state to facilitate any initiative for which the market would play a role in public policy. The state withdraws from social policies so that the market enters and attends” (Sandra Quintela, interview).

The presence of the market in the structuring of social life (and no longer religion or the State) caused a phenomenon not conditioned by religion, but fundamentally religious. As Walter Benjamin (2015) reflects, capitalism can be seen as a cultic religion, in which utilitarianism (investments, speculations, financial operations, stock exchange maneuvers, buying and selling of goods) becomes a religious cult of permanent duration. The well-known Prosperity Theology and its derivatives are the theological translation of this religion (Lyndon dos Santos, interview).

However, in recent decades, the neoliberal and minimum state discourse has shown signs of failure, subjecting itself to criticism and resistance and becoming difficult to accept when it comes to attention to the basic rights of human life and the sustainability of the planet. There are insistent falls in investment, bankruptcies in companies, rising unemployment that increases poverty and inequality, and reduces the capacity for consumption. The call to defend the family to make the neoliberal discourse and its practices more palatable emerges. In the defense of the family is embedded the idea of private production—it is the family that cares for the education of children, the elderly, the sick, that provides survival, which connotes the irrelevance of public policies on education, health, labor rights (Sandra Quintela, interview). In this sense, it is observed as a political-economic project that shapes subjectivities, in a scenario of a crisis of the capital-centered system, anchored in the ideology of individual entrepreneurship combined with pro-family morality, and with the anti-rights resentment of women and LGBTQI+ and black people.

2.1.3 Moral panic and permanent clash with enemies

The construction of these bases and the support to them are conquered through moral panic, the rhetoric of fear, to cause insecurity and promote affections. Moral panics are phenomena that emerge in situations in which societies react to certain circumstances and social identities that they assume to represent some form of danger. They are how the media, public opinion, and social control agents react to certain disruptions of normative standards and, feeling threatened, tend to agree that “something should be done” regarding these circumstances and these threatening social identities. Moral panic is fully characterized when concern increases in disproportion to actual and general danger (Miskolci, 2007).

In the context of the four countries observed in this research, a moral panic was developed around the “defense of the family” and the children of families, as the center of the society that would be at risk, because of the agenda of equal sexual rights. Alarmist messages present this agenda as one of destruction and threat to society based on the notion that if the family and children are at risk the whole society is at risk. To this end, fundamentalist movements have articulated broad use of media in all formats, traditional and digital, with extensive use of disinformation; especially fake news, to feed moral panic and to interfere in political agendas (Douglas, 2018). There is also the dissemination of hate speech against social movements, and activists directly.



Disinformation means “Information that is proven to be false or misleading, which is created, presented and disclosed to obtain economic advantages or to deliberately deceive, which may harm the public interest”. (See European Commission, 2018)

Fundamentalisms gravitate among what they consider enemies which justify their actions. Two enemies are identified (Joanildo Burity, interview): 1) political progress throughout Latin America that have given ample space to the right and dignity of social minorities, taking the political left-wing as a field of reference and also the feminist and LGBTQI+ movements; 2) anti-globalization discourse–criticism against the social-economic model at risk since the end of the 1990s to impose an even more restrictive capitalist model on social rights.

This conservative reaction affects the aggregation of conservative projects–politics, social rights, morality–however, there is no unity between these groups. Among fundamentalist religious groups there is conflict over the effective way of fulfilling the role of religion that they propagate in society. There are different ideas about the model of society and about different ways of achieving this model (Andréa Silveira, interview). An example is a division between reformists and reconstructionists, already exposed in this text.

These different sectors are not brought together by the convergence of principles and ideas, but by the process of resonance–clashes against enemies in such a way that they recognize and unite there. This discursive/ideological formation is a collective shelter that only exists because these two common enemies were elected and fight against them, which promotes the unity of reactionary groups against immigration (Joanildo Burity, interview).

2.1.4 Threat to traditional communities

Fundamentalisms also threaten the culture of traditional peoples (indigenous and African matrix), classifying it as witchcraft and demonic. Cultural rights are more affected by actions of homogenization and westernization of uses and customs, which takes the form of new cultural colonialism, which, once again, seeks to

erase differences. These actions take place, historically, through Christian, Catholic, and Evangelical missionary practices. The conversion of indigenous people and afro-descendants means, still in the years 2000, the rejection of religious expressions of origin and adoption of faith in the Christian God, through baptism and the adoption of the doctrines and precepts of faith taught by catechesis. The conversion to the Christian faith also means the assimilation of the white culture of the missionaries in the adoption of their language, their dressing way, their way of eating, of forming a family and relating to it, of living in community, of integrating with the environment, of making politics.

The Roman Catholic Church, the first to adopt this type of evangelization with indigenous and black enslaved peoples, changed its attitude after the Second Vatican Council, with the institution of social pastoral care and the discussion on the inculturation of the Gospel in Latin America, especially in the Latin American Episcopal Conferences of Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979). Even so, the fundamentalist groups, which have stood out in Roman Catholicism in the region since the years of the pontificate of John Paul II, have had an impact on missionary activities, causing tension among agents committed to indigenous and black causes and leaders who demanded: “conversions” (Jesus Alfonso Flórez Lopes, group interview; Roberto Antônio Liebgott, focal group).

Evangelical groups began to act more intensely in the mid-20th century, among indigenous people, especially through U.S. missionary agencies, and among black populations, through evangelistic projects of churches in territories occupied by them. In the years 2000, the expansion of the activities of these fundamentalist groups was identified, some of them linked to agribusiness, mining, logging, and real estate speculation companies, which sought to intervene in the territories of these populations to achieve their economic interests (Damiani, Pereira, Nocetti, Paredes, 2018; Restrepo, 2017).

One example is the US organization Youth with a Mission (YWAM), present in the four countries prioritized in this research (and in several others in the region). It has been the

target of legal proceedings in Brazil for violations of indigenous rights. One of them resulted in the expulsion of YWAM missionaries from the Suruwahá village, in Amazonas, in 2003, through the intervention of the Attorney General's Office (Recommendation PRDC-AM N° 003/2003). The formal expulsion by the Brazilian State was based on an anthropological study by the Expert Analyst in Anthropology of the Federal Public Ministry and a complaint PR/AM No. 1.13.000.000077/2002-46-PRDC/AM No. 440, presented by the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), from the Roman Catholic Church, against YWAM. The organization has been accused of proselytizing, disrupting the community (having caused mass suicides), enslaving indigenous people, illegal blood extraction, biopiracy of forest seeds, construction of illegal landing strip, illegal sale of timber, illegal removal of indigenous people, the kidnapping of children and racism (AM... 2010).

Neoliberal policies impose rules for the reconstruction of the State that affect traditional communities, with the extinction of public policies for the preservation of territories and the cultivation of ancestral cultures. Most of these communities do not have the minimum conditions to exist. This means the deconstruction of conquered rights, the imposition of deterritorialization (with a view to the exploration of lands historically occupied by agribusiness or mining companies), determination of integrationism (an ideology that these populations will only be considered human if they adhere to this model of society).

There are cases of forced sedentarization of indigenous peoples and forced labor related to the dynamics of missions. Among Peruvian indigenous people, for example, the struggle for land, the maintenance of language and the value of women (who take great care of the first two) have suffered attacks, especially because of the monoculture promoted by agribusiness. It encourages the abandonment of land for migration to the cities and individual entrepreneurship. Indigenous people are driven by this, tempted to reach the modern world, even with a religiosity that is alien to them. Argentine and Brazilian indigenous people have faced this same issue. Among the most drastic consequences

for these populations is migration to cities, in search for job and survival, with the increase in poverty and misery of both indigenous migrants and the urban population, and large numbers of suicides (Jorge Arboccó, Denise Chávez, Leo Suarez, group interviews; Sandro Luckmann, focus group).

This process has worsened in the last decade due to public policies of fundamentalist political-religious governments, such as Colombia, Peru, and Brazil, which give an official character to these practices.

In Colombia, indigenous and Afro-descendants suffer from violence and a lack of peace. The establishment of order imposed by the State employing weapons devastates traditional territories to confront enemies of the State, as reported in the introduction to this text. These governmental actions deny the basis of spirituality and have demanded spiritual resistance. Indigenous peoples end up organizing themselves to guarantee their territories, outside of institutional legitimation and are classified as disordered. This is because they establish autonomous guards to defend their territories, without the use of firearms, to establish another order compared to that imposed under the logic of prejudice. There is a process with the Colombian Truth Commission in the creation of the Interethnic (Afrodescendant-Indigenous) Truth Commission of the Pacific Region, in 2019, with representatives from the ten Pacific sub-regions. It seeks to prove that the armed conflict in Colombia caused spiritual damage, damage to the territory, denying the symbolic representation of these peoples, which resulted in a high number of suicides by indigenous children and young people (Adriel Ruiz, Jesus Alfonso Flórez Lopes, group interview; Commission for the Clarification of the Verdad, the Convivencia and the In the Repetition of Colombia, <https://comisiondelaverdad.co/>).

In Peru, Afrodescendant communities suffer intensely from structural racism, with lower pay for workers, lower housing on the outskirts of cities. With the advance of Covid-19, in 2020, the neglect of the state towards these communities became explicit, as they did not receive primary attention. In Peru, the Catholic Church ends up occupying, in some communities, the

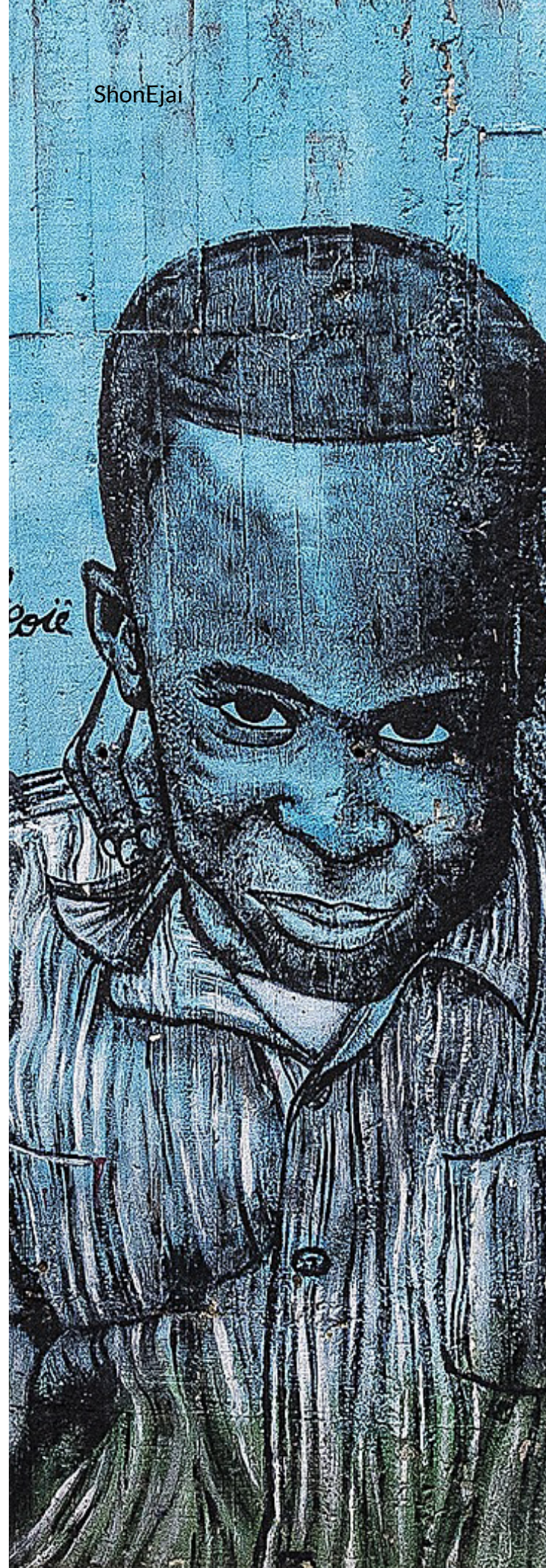
place of the State in the relief of suffering (Luisa Bustamante, group interview).

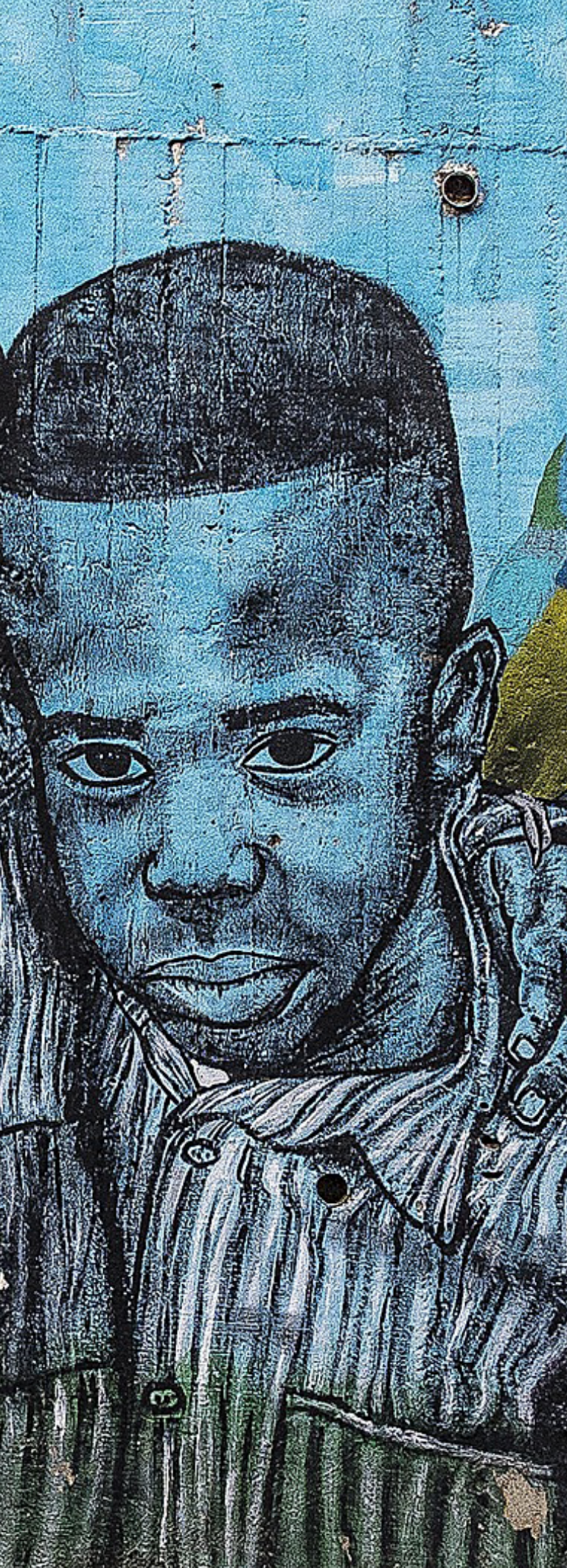
In Brazil, the government of Jair Bolsonaro has favored the deforestation of the Amazon, where a large part of the indigenous population lives, and does not repress the action of miners and prospectors in the invasion of indigenous lands. This government has also given space to missionaries from fundamentalist evangelical agencies to work in agencies that take care of indigenous rights. Concerning Afro-descendants, the government has acted to reduce the right to land and state assistance, which favors private economic interest in quilombola territories, as mentioned above. Jair Bolsonaro is a long-standing critic of land demarcations for Indians and quilombolas. During the electoral campaign, he said that if elected he would not demarcate an inch more of reserves for these two communities. On that occasion, he said that in his government “the Indians would be emancipated”. In the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Brazilian government vetoed, in July 2020, a series of measures aimed at the health of indigenous peoples, quilombolas, and other traditional communities during the new coronavirus pandemic (Bolsonaro..., 2020).

Indigenous and Afro-descendants living in quilombos were deprived of territorial and health protection, emergency expansion of support by health professionals, rapid testing for suspected cases of Covid-19. Without these resources, entire human groups remain on the margins of society, which denotes the indifference of the State for the number of deaths resulting from these actions

Activists who defend the rights of indigenous populations and afro-descendants, in group interviews and focus groups conducted by this research, observe that economics, politics, and religion are in the process of destroying traditional communities.

These activists report that in traditional indigenous and afro-descendant communities, fundamentalist actions promote a disarticulation of community life, collective, with the undoing of community ties and the establishment of conflicts because of distinct religious supports—those who maintain the traditional religion,





those who became catholic, those who convert to the evangelical churches. For that, religious groups, with government support, in cases like Brazil's, in indigenous villages and quilombos, agency the extermination of the identities of ethnic groups, with the dismantling of what has been conquered and built up of public policies over decades, with the erasing of plural identities, of communities historically abandoned by the State (they do not have drinking water, hospital, basic education). It seeks to break with bonds of ancestry and culture, rejecting mature wisdom, interrupting the connection with the land and with joint, community work, with the imposition of the ideology of entrepreneurship.

Quilombos, “union”, in the language of the Bantus peoples (region of Angola). They were communities of refuge for black people who fled from slavery in colonial Brazil and also sheltered indigenous and marginalized white people. They were a source of resistance, since the beginning of slavery, for the transformation of the cruel reality of slavery. Several Quilombos were extinct by Portuguese repression, but many remain to this day. During President Lula’s administration, in 2003, a decree was signed regulating the identification, recognition, delimitation, demarcation, and titling of lands occupied by remnants of quilombos communities to comply with Art. 68 of the Federal Constitution.

In these cases, there is an action that combines the religious preaching of Prosperity Theology, missions in indigenous lands and churches established in territories inhabited by Afro-descendants, which feeds the search for individual success through neoliberal entrepreneurship, with actions of indifference by the State to the rights of these traditional populations (Peru and Argentina) or of destructive intervention (Colombia and Brazil).

There is the risk of extinction of traditional peoples (migration, deterritorialization, suicides, deaths by Covid-19), even greater impoverishment and misery, and food insecurity, accompanied by the death of ancestral and cultural traditions in the name of religious conversion and survival.

Activists also note that indigenous and afro-descendant representation is minimal in the parliaments of the countries prioritized in the FESUR research, which hinders the defense of these populations in institutional spaces, even if there is a presence of parliamentarians aligned with the rights of traditional populations. The parliaments in the four countries searched, which are increasingly conservative in their representation, are made up, to a significant extent, of politicians linked to agribusiness and companies that have economic interests in the territories of traditional peoples. Likewise, politicians linked to these groups hold executive positions in the ministerial cabinets on strategic issues (agriculture, environment, social minorities). This is a very unequal political offensive, in the face of what activists of indigenous and Afro-descendant causes can achieve, and adds to the actions of ultraconservative neoliberal governments (Vitte, 2017).

2.1.5 Coordinated actions

The forms of action of fundamentalist groups identify the formation of alliances of movements on the continent, with similar and coordinated campaigns and actions that imply the occupation of social media and the streets. The movement “Don’t mess with my Children” is an example of how these coalitions establish articulations at a regional level, having been initiated in Peru and expanded to Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Mexico, and Uruguay with the same slogans and aesthetics.

On another front are actors and anti-gender networks that work in an articulated way at the regional level, especially in the spaces of the Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American System of Human Rights, composed of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Corte IIDH) (Moragas, 2020). Mirta Moragas’ study attributes this articulation as a result of a “strategic secularization” (adoption of secular rhetoric to diminish the degree of dogmatism) that made it possible for anti-gender forces linked to Christian churches to amplify their voices and camouflage religious motivations for action.



The discourse assumed by the actors and networks in the international platforms, which take the form of NGOs, based on science and human rights, has allowed them to occupy ample space previously destined exclusively for secular actors and states. These groups have given protagonism to women and young people.

Mirta Moragas lists the organizations that act regionally on anti-gender issues giving support for local “defense of life” organizations: Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), of evangelical origin, created in 1994, in the United States; Human Life International (HLI), created in 1981, and International Human Rights Group, both of Catholic origin, from the United States; Hazte Oír, of Spanish Catholic origin.

From thematic coalitions created in 2017, by the OAS, evangelicals created the “Ibero-American Evangelical Congress”, with a version in Brazil entitled “Brazilian Coalition”. In 2018, the Ibero-American Congress for Life and the Family was held in Mexico, resulting from these articulations. The Pan American Youth Forum, opened in 2015 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, is the articulation that involves youth for the defense of life and the family. The leadership is of the Youth Front (<https://www.frentejuven.org/>), with headquarters in Argentina and branches in Peru, Ecuador and Paraguay, which works to train young people for national and international impact. The second edition of the Pan American Youth Forum was held in 2017, in Lima, Peru.

2.1.6 The issues of the Secular State and religious freedom

Groups of activists, politicians, and scholars critical of the progress of fundamentalist expressions in South America have often raised the issue of the defense of the Secular State. In this understanding, the political-religious incidences via the executive, legislative, and judiciary powers, as indicated so far, place the secularity of the State under threat, ignoring constitutional principles (except for Argentina which defines itself as a confessional State).

Studies show that secular States in South America, historically, do not exist in their entirety, just as there are not fully democratic states (Duarte, 2019). States in South America were

not born secular, are not totally secular, and are undergoing a process of secularization. Christianity has never been a part of society, but it has always been widely regarded as the only truth that liberates and characterizes peoples.

With the characteristics of the fundamentalisms that have been expressed in the region in recent decades, described in this text, it can be observed that, despite being seen by critics as a threat to the secular State, these groups do not deny it. On the contrary, they give a new signify to the notion of the secularity of the State and the agenda of individual and human rights and advocate their action based on the secular State and the freedom of religion that characterizes it. The claim is that the secular State is not an atheist state and that Christians are citizens and have the right to act politically and socially according to their Christian nature (Andréa Silveira, interview).

This is related to the “strategic secularization,” mentioned above, which allows fundamentalist anti-rights forces to amplify and diversify their voices and eliminate inter-religious tensions. The new discourse is anchored in science and human rights and their international platforms, which allows groups to dispute a broader space with secular actors and secular States. The actions of fundamentalist groups in the spaces of the OAS, described in the previous item, reflect this. The speeches and arguments they present are based on a restrictive interpretation of international human rights instruments, but take them into account. Several of them use “natural law” to promote a new approach to human rights.

For this reason, there are several strategies of occupation of spaces in the OAS and the UN by fundamentalist groups, through public positions gained in conservative governments, to dispute this speech. The appointment of the conservative Catholic Alejandro Ordoñez, as Colombian ambassador to the OAS, and the evangelical pastor Damares Alves, as Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights in Brazil, with operations at the UN, are examples of how this “strategic secularization” is manifested in South America.

However, the UN Human Rights Council is attentive to these political-religious movements in their actions to restrict rights. In March 2020, the Council published the “Report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief” which deals with violence and gender discrimination in the name of religion or belief (Report..., 2020). The report recognizes that in several states around the world, religious precepts underlie laws and practices that constitute violations of the right to non-discrimination of women, girls, and LGBTQI+. It also affirms that in other States, claims of religious freedom are being used to reverse and seek exemptions from laws that protect against gender-based violence and discrimination.

Special Rapporteur Ahmed Shaheed offers emblematic cases of both phenomena and their impact on gender equality and freedom of religion or belief around the world. In consultations held in Latin America, it was stated that discriminatory religious decrees inform laws and policies that restrict sexual and reproductive rights in the region, including, among others, partial or total prohibitions on access to abortion and contraception, prohibitions on assistance to reproductive technologies and gender reassignment surgery, and limits on the provision of evidence-based sexuality education.

The Report highlights that four States in the region have imposed comprehensive abortion bans, in two states women and girls may be prosecuted for pregnancy abortion, and that limitations in other countries have severely limited women’s access to abortion in circumstances in which denial has caused serious suffering. Three-quarters of all abortions in the region are reportedly unsafe due to legal impediments to safe access, resulting in high rates of preventable maternal mortality in Argentina, Venezuela, Brazil, Paraguay, Peru, and Bolivia.

Consultations in Latin America, according to the Special Rapporteur, revealed that sexual and reproductive health education programs had been restricted in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Paraguay after pressure from religious groups. Another example is a campaign by religious groups against the IACHR’s Consultative Opinion on Identity, Equality, and Non-Discrimination of Gender, characterizing “gender ideology” as “against human nature” and explicitly encouraging discrimination against LGBTQI+ individuals.

The Special Report of the UN Commission on Human Rights also expresses deep concern about the increase in political and religious campaigns that claim religious freedom to seek the retrogression of human rights that are fundamental to gender equality, both at the national and international levels. For this reason, the report affirms freedom of religion or belief, and non-discrimination, as two mutually reinforcing rights that clarify the existing international legal background governing their intersection. The report concludes by emphasizing the responsibility of States to create enabling environments to promote non-discrimination and freedom of religion of the belief rights of women, girls, and LGBTQI+ people.

In reaction, Brazilian Human Rights Minister Damara Alves, in an interview at the UN, highlighted the “role of the churches in the nation”. She insisted on the “defense of life,” a way found to declare the Brazilian government’s opposition to any loophole that could be opened in international resolutions for abortion. The Brazilian government has adopted a stance that has surprised foreign delegations at the UN. In draft resolutions at the UN, the government has warned that it would not accept references to terms such as sex education or reproductive rights (Chad, 2020).

2.2 New US fundamentalist movements in South America

The entry of the new fundamentalist movements of the United States into South America has been strong since the 1990s with the reformists, and in 2010 with the reconstructionists. The advance of post-dictatorship democracies, with governments considered to be left-wing, implementers of policies concerning human and sexual rights, has stimulated reformist and reconstructionist actions, taking the form of anti-movements. With the conservative wave of the 2010s, already described in the introduction of this text, new fundamentalist articulations become more evident, at

this time appearing as soldiers in a “cultural war” or a war on “cultural Marxism”, a term that is now widely used by conservative religious and political leaders, in the debate of agendas such as education and sexual rights.

2.2.1 Dominion Theology

Movements such as “My Children is no your business” that oppose educational policies in Colombia and Peru and Argentina and the School Without Party project, plus the homeschooling proposals in the Brazilian government with Jair Bolsonaro, demonstrate the strength of reconstructionist fundamentalism on the continent. Reconstructionists also defend the Christian occupation of the legislative and judiciary, based on logic: ‘we need laws in which we believe and judgments for what we believe’” (Andréa Silveira, interview).

Home-schooling is the full replacement of school attendance by home education, where responsibility for the formal education of children is assigned to the parents or guardians themselves. The child or adolescent does not attend an educational institution, whether public or private. This proposal is longstanding and is already applied by many families in various parts of the world. Fundamentalist groups put the issue back on the public policy agenda for education when they relate schools to a cultural war, taking a stand against “Marxist indoctrination” and sex education for homosexuality and abortion. One example is the home-schooling project, launched by one of the leaders of the Tea Party (founded in 2004, on the foundations of the Dominion Theology), candidate for the U.S. Presidency, Ronald Ernst Paul, in 2013, “the Ron Paul Curriculum. Donald Trump’s appointment of Republican Reconstructionist Betsy Dee DeVos as Secretary of Education of the United States in 2016 illustrates the strength of fundamentalism in that country’s political present. The government of Brazil has developed projects in this area. Studies indicate that home-schooling provides an ideal educational atmosphere to support several fundamentalist principles: resistance to contemporary culture; suspicion against institutional authority and professional experience; parental control and family centrality; and intertwining between faith and academia (See Kunzman, 2010).

In this line is the “**Capitol Ministries**” (<https://capmin.org/>), founded in 1996 for the religious accompaniment of the California political body by Ralph Drollinger, a former basketball player who converted to Christianity, studied theology, and became the pastor of this ministry. The goal of Capitol Ministries is “to evangelize elected and appointed political leaders so that they may reach maturity in Christ”. The basis, according to the studies offered, is an evangelical vision aligned with the American ultra-right. «Without this guidance, it is far more difficult to arrive at public policies that satisfy God and are beneficial to the progress of the nation,» as Drollinger states in one of the studies he offers (Drollinger, 2019).

In 2010, Drollinger gave a national dimension to the ministry, reaching out to the federal government with the first cycle of studies conducted in Washington. In 2015 a study plan was created for Senators, and in 2017 a special ministry was created for high-level members of Donald Trump’s government, with weekly meetings. Rollinger is proud to say it is “the first accomplishment of its kind in over 100 years” (Capitol Ministries, <https://capmin.org/>)

With support from the Trump government, Capitol Ministries created “Bible study discipleship for political leaders” of 24 countries on four continents, intending to create 200 ministries in 200 countries over the long term. In Latin America, it opened branches in Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, under the direction of Global Director for Latin America Oscar Zamora, in action since 2017, and appointed local coordinators. Zamora, a Peruvian Neopentecostal pastor who studied theology at West Coast Christian College, California, said that “it was as if the leaders of the Latin nations were ready to receive the Word of God and were just waiting for the Capitol Ministries to show them the way” (Capitol Ministries, <https://capmin.org/>). Ralph Drollinger’s book “Rebuilding America: The Biblical Blueprint” has been translated into Spanish and Portuguese under the new title “Rebuilding a Nation.

Ralph Drollinger offers the content characteristic of American fundamentalism and presents himself as anti-LGBTQI+, anti-women's rights, anti-immigration (with support for family separation on the U.S. border), denies climate change, declares Catholicism as "one of the world's main false religions" (Schwartz, 2019). In March 2020, it created controversy by publishing a text on the Capitol Ministries website that associates the coronavirus pandemic with homosexuality, environmentalism, and God's punishment (Drollinger, 2020; Scott, 2020).

DOMINION TEOLOGY



2.2.2 Cultural Warfare

Reformist fundamentalism has also found bases in South America, with groups working with artistic production, literature, intellectuals, focused on religious discourse. The L'Abri Institute (<http://labri.org/>) has a branch in Brazil since 2008, offering formation to young people, "legitimizing the presupposition of divine domination, of a society with Christian values, through rationalist, intellectualized, non-simplistic discourse. L'Abri attracts part of university youth because it builds its image as a sophisticated Christian institute" (Andréa Silveira, interview).

The director of L'Abri Brasil, Guilherme de Carvalho who is pastor of Hope Church, was appointed in 2019, Director of Promotion and Education in Human Rights of the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights of the Jair Bolsonaro government. Guilherme de Carvalho is a neo-Calvinist intellectual "master of theology and science of religion" and professor of theology, and is one of the founders of the Brazilian Christian Association in Science, maintaining the neo-Calvinist reformist tendency, already described in this text. In March 2020, the pastor left the Bolsonaro government, claiming that "the presidency and its ideological core cannot represent Christian values in the public world" (Carvalho, n.d.).

The gospel cultural movement, from the 1990s in Latin America, is also an important vehicle of reformist ideology. Besides offering doctrinal content through music, the gospel shows offer religious preaching, and several singers and musical groups have their spaces of religious education. During this period, the distribution of books and movies with evangelical content is also growing. One example is the book "The Shack", of Canadian origin, from 2007, published in Portuguese and Spanish in 2008, and released on film in 2017 in South America. Uniting music and religious forma-

tion, the gospel culture plays a significant role in the dissemination of theologies of prosperity and spiritual warfare, and crosses religious boundaries, conquering secular spaces through entertainment media (TV, cinema, music shows).

The most recent cultural movement in the United States in South America is The Send. The Call Ministries project (<https://www.the-callannouncement.com/>), created in 2001, by evangelist Lou Engle, founder of the International House of Prayer. The Call is a series of spiritual revival events, held for young people in stadiums, with musical shows, prayers, and religious preaching focused on moral issues. Engle's events bring together hundreds of thousands of people with participants from several countries. Permeated by right-wing political speeches, The Call gained sympathy from the Christian Right. Newspaper from 2010, classified Lou Engle as an unofficial prayer leader of the Republican Party. Engle also gained prominence having been portrayed in three religious' productions in the form of a film.

The Call brought together evangelical groups from various countries in 2019, intending to expand its work to "evangelize America once again", fulfilling the mission given by Jesus Christ, with the export of the American experience. The Call was then extinct, to give way to the wider project: "Lou Eagle Ministries" (<https://louengle.com/>), with a focus on students from universities and schools, considered two mission fields, added to two others: families and nations. The project has the support of the U.S. organizations Youth With a Mission (YWAM) (<https://www.ywam.org>), founded in 1960; Lifestyle Christianity (<https://lifestylechristianity.com>), an organization created in 2014 by evangelist Todd White; and Christ for All Nations (<https://cfan.org>), an evangelistic organization created in 1974 to work initially in Africa and then began to carry out what they call "crusades" (mass events) around the world.

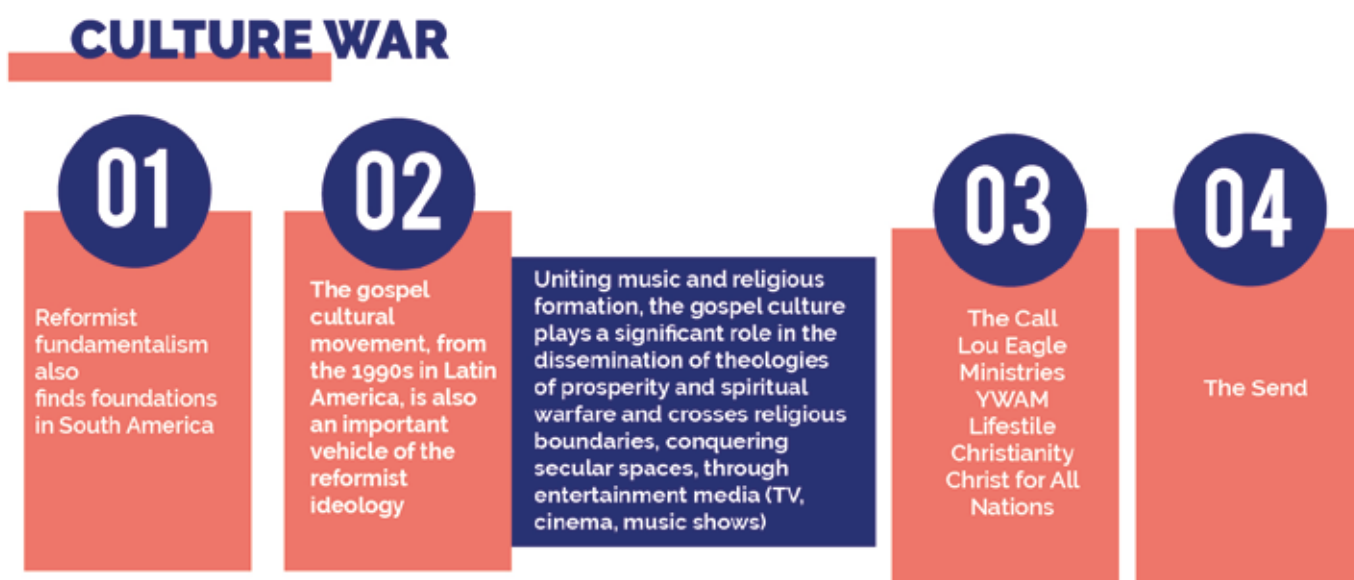
As an activity of Lou Engle Ministries, The Send [Brazil] (<https://thesend.org.br>) was held in 2020, on February 8, in three crowded soccer stadiums (two in São Paulo and one in Brasília), with sales low cost tickets and online registration. The 12-hour events were organized with the support of Dunamis Movement, a Brazilian



para-ecclesiastical movement originating from YWAM, whose target is youth (<https://dunamis-movement.com/>). Characterized by a rich infrastructure, The Send Brasil had a mix of musical performances from the United States and the most prominent of Brazilian gospel music, with religious preaching by American characters and Brazilian conservative evangelicals. The Brasilia event was attended by President Jair Bolsonaro and the Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights, Pastora Damares Alves, which affirmed the character and the political line of the project.

There was an event The Send scheduled to Argentina (<https://thesend.com.ar>), on April 25, 2020, at the José Amalfitani Stadium, in Buenos Aires. With the preventive measures against Covid-19, the event was postponed to 2021, but The Send Brasil held an online event on the date, on Youtube, on the Dunamis Movement Channel, with 12 hours duration, with the same type of programming held in stadiums with singers and preachers from the United States and Brazil. As of the completion date of this text, the video had been watched by three million people.

All organizations that support The Send have Christian and youth missionary schools and offer online content. The Send is also organizing its own schools for young South Americans. Through registration for the events, a direct mailing of thousands of contacts has been created through a The Send application.



2.2.3 Mission among indigenous people

The indigenous peoples of South America have always been the target of the hundreds of mission agencies identified as fundamentalist in the United States, which have missionaries spread over 192 countries, with 33% working in Latin America, the largest number, according to data from the late 1990s (Bersher, 2001).

One of these agencies is the “New Tribes Mission” [NTM] founded in 1942 in the United States, which in 2017 changed its identity, becoming the “Ethnos 360°” (Andréa Silveira, interview). It is considered one of the most extreme fundamentalist groups (Bersher, 2001), believing that the second coming of Christ will only occur when the last tribe on earth is reached by the Gospel. In the year of its foundation, the NTM entered Bolivia, Colombia, in 1945, Brazil, in 1951, Paraguay, in

1952, and Venezuela, in 1953, dedicating more actions with isolated peoples (Becerra, 2015).

The NTM has been accused of ethnic crimes in various countries on the continent. In Venezuela, they were accused of exploiting indigenous people and was expelled from the country in 2005. In Paraguay, the NTM was accused of collaborating with the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner and of committing ethnocide against the Ayoreos indigenous people, who were forced to abandon their nomadic way of life, had their hair cut, forced to renounce their beliefs, forced to live and work in the missionary settlements, wearing “western” clothes. Some deaths occurred in this process (Blunt, 2019).

In Brazil, the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), a government agency that oversees the application of indigenous policies, has already removed the NTM from indigenous areas because of accusations of abuse. There are several lawsuits against it, and in 1991 the country’s Supreme Court has banned the agency from the Zo’é village.

The new Ethnos 360° organization, a reconstruction of the controversial image built, gives continuity to the NTM’s work and maintains bases in Brazil, Colombia, and Bolivia. The strength that the agency maintains was highlighted in Brazil in 2020, when one of its former missionaries, anthropologist Ricardo Lopes Dias, was appointed by President Jair Bolsonaro to command the General Coordination of Isolated and Recent Contact Indians at FUNAI.

YWAM, already cited in this text, also works among indigenous peoples in South America, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela. The organization has been the target of legal proceedings in Brazil for violations of indigenous rights, as already mentioned.

3 Possible response strategies

The exposure of research results to this point indicates that the research hypothesis is proven: there is a pattern of systematic action developed by religiopolitical fundamentalisms in South America, resulting from a strategy that threatens and seeks to control democracies in the region. The research also corroborated that this pattern of action directly affects the exercise of human, sexual and reproductive rights defenders, reduces the environment or the space propitious for civil society in the region, and challenges the responses developed by the OBFs and churches linked to the ACT Alliance.

Therefore, this part of the FESUR research report now presents the relevant aspect emphasized in the empirical methodology of the research: the analysis of interviews with experts and focus groups and group interviews with human rights activists. It offers reflections and describes experiences presented to FESUR, to partner organizations and movements, as possible strategies to respond to this reality of political-religious fundamentalisms exposed here. A synthesis of this collected content, re-



fined from the reflections shared at the International Seminar Fundamentalisms, Democracy and Human Rights, carried out by FESUR, is presented in the following ten points.

3.1 Necessary self-criticism

A starting point indicated is the relevance of self-criticism of groups that act in defense of justice, peace, and human rights, considered progressive, ecumenical, or similar, and that place themselves in opposition to the progress of fundamentalisms. It is recognized that these groups underestimated the emergence of these new fundamentalisms, generalized their propositions and profiles, did not pay due attention to their complexity and capacity to articulate, did not see them as a threat, and when it is concretely configured, they seek a reaction without a more refined understanding of the situation.

There is the warning that the discourse on fundamentalism comes from subjectivities that do not consider themselves fundamentalists, and for that these people and groups define fundamentalism pejoratively, as an accusation to Pentecostal Evangelicals or Catholics, as is done with Islam in Europe and the United States. The intolerance and fanaticism that can manifest themselves in fundamentalism are also present in the mentality and actions of left and center political groups. There is a certain difficulty in dealing with identity issues originating in and led by the feminist, LGBTQI+, indigenous and black movements, whose visions and little dialogical postures of certain groups involved end up dividing the world into many fragments, polarizing and creating conflicts that could be avoided. Among non-religious progressive groups, there is prejudice against religious activists, as if all were fundamentalists. These attitudes end up reproducing authoritarianism and “possession” of truths.

Added to this dimension is the need for a review of policies on the part of the partner organizations of the North (international cooperation agencies), which in recent decades have taken on strategies to reduce or eliminate funding for alternative theological projects that would allow for a narrative dispute and the formation of Catholic and evangelical leaders who oppose the progress of fundamentalism.

Still, as a self-criticism, women activists heard by the research warn that it is urgent to recognize that not all ACT Alliance organizations assume gender justice policies and sometimes align themselves with the conservative cosmovision on the role of women, eventually reinforcing gender inequality. This often makes it very difficult to reconcile and promote a common agenda with non-religious feminist organizations, when ACT Alliance organizations go their separate path in this regard, they are fragmented.

Strengthening of institutional actions and regional alliances

A strategy resulting from self-criticism should be to strengthen regional alliances and articulations to overcome the fragmentation of actions. This can happen with the development of a set of initiatives common to different organizations, maintaining their own activities, programmed based on this common axis, with precise theological content and open dialogue with non-religious sectors, taking into account cultural and languages diversity of the region.

FESUR should contribute to this as a space that makes it possible to visualize and influence local actions. The ACT Alliance forums in each country should also be more intensely articulated in the light of regional experience. In this sense, FESUR can act to survey the gifts and specificities of each organization, so that efforts can be shared, avoiding duplications that generate waste of human and financial resources.

The OBFs of ACT Alliance can also operate to recreate a regional ecumenical space, with a view to overcoming the crisis process of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI). In this reconstruction, take into account the expansion of networks, since the ecumenical movement is larger than the confessional dimension of historic churches and their bodies. This means giving importance to the balance and integration of actors in the ecumenical movement and giving visibility to what is being accomplished by different national and regional ecumenical networks, making it possible to articulate ACT with these spaces. An example is the Ecumenical Network for Human Rights and the Secular State, which is in the process of creation, among other multiple networks of women, traditional communities, young people, and environmentalists.



skeeze

It is also relevant to establish new spaces for North-South Global exchange, involving cooperation agencies and counterparts throughout the region. In this direction, it is important to strengthen the presence of ACT Alliance on regional platforms such as the Organization of American States (OAS), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).

With regard to the United Nations (UN), it is important to analyse which are the processes of global impact that contribute to local efforts, in which ACT Alliance should be inserted. There are two paths: (1) the General Secretariat and the UN agencies; (2) the General Assembly and the Security Council. It is necessary to socialize information and provide evidence in these spaces.

Still on the UN, there is the need for actions to build narrative bridges, since its focus is on the role of the Vatican and not on evangelical churches. The relationship with the Catholic Church is a relevant theme in this respect, as these narrative bridges can contribute to overcoming barriers around themes, such as gender, taking into account other human rights agendas, in which the Catholicism force is prominent.

3.2 Better understanding the role of religion and its relationship with society

From self-criticism, it is important to reflect on the role of religion in South American reality. Identify with attention what has been the place of religion in daily life, in culture and not only in politics. Admitting that there is not only a role, they are plural roles of religion. The ambiguity of these roles must be considered. It is essential to assume that religions, not only Christianity, have a role in sustaining life in the region. This sustaining of life has been perceived resoundingly, in recent times, as something also profitable economically, by all religious groups. The multiplicity of temples, movements, and media within the churches is economically and symbolically profitable. It produces joy to have supporters, to have people who listen to the speeches produced (Ivone Gebara, interview).

FESUR organizations should establish networks between ecumenical, religious and social movements and organizations that share agendas for the defense of human, sexual, reproductive and environmental rights, including people and groups from the Global North. It is also necessary to map, articulate and influence the agendas of the North, especially the United States and Europe,

reconstructing the role that Latin America has already achieved in past decades.

It is also necessary to build relations with States, with civil society organizations and with part of the private sector, which is also frustrated by the multilateral crisis and promotes specific policies.

In this regard, the experience of “Diálogos Difíciles y Improbables” [Difficult and Unlikely Dialogues] from Colombia, with periodic meetings for dialogue between feminist groups, LGBTQI+, and church leaders are important experiences. As well as the Latin American level dialogue tables with diverse groups of women, religious and non-religious, that ACT’s Gender Justice Practice Community (CoP) in Latin America and the Caribbean has been involved in.

Difficult and Unlikely Dialogues

This methodology is based on the formulation of U.S. scholar John Paul Lederach, an expert in conflict mediation, consultant to the staff of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, the “unlikely dialogues”. The academics worked in Colombia with social movements and populations that suffered the impact of the internal armed conflict and advised the Truth Commission established in 2017 in the country (Los ‘Dialogues’..., 2018). These are conversations between different people and groups in polarized contexts, to find a common strategy to achieve long-term transformations. They are dialogues in divided societies and transition.

3.3 Resume training for critical thinking

From these bases, it is highlighted the need for churches and OBFs to resume actions of development of critical thinking, which they emphasized so much in the 1980s. Prioritize the grassroots, community work. Resume the formation of critical awareness. This requires education, learning to listen, and proposing changes. It also implies working with the memory and history of religious groups and social movements and their effects on the present. The memory that must be recovered and re-signify. If fundamentalist groups are forming for the “capitalist religion,” it is important to resume the critical community formation of this system, revising the human rights agenda and participatory democracy.

At this point, it is important to resume popular education programs, with spaces for training and alternative communication re-signified to possible face-to-face actions (courses, debates, conversation round) and digital (production and circulation of content in social media).

A challenge is the creation of new programs of popular reading of the Bible in a contextualized and ecumenical way, placing the Christian Holy Scriptures in the center of projects of formation of Christian leaders that overcome the logic of fundamentalisms in the management of the biblical text.

Concerning the critique of the new neoliberal attacks on the logic of political-religious fundamentalisms, it is important to give visibility to the economy reflected under the feminist look, the solidarity economy. Making visible practices experienced in women’s cooperatives and other experiences spread throughout South America, often invisible. Highlighting spaces in which the economy is solidary, in which the market is experienced in a mixture of popular, alternative, high culture. Highlighting what is different is one of the best ways to confront homogenizing fundamentalisms.

3.4 Undressing the conservative field and fundamentalisms

It is important in this process, according to experts and activists heard by the research, to undress the conservative field for what it is—for the aspirations of supremacy and not hegemony. Being clear about fundamentalisms and what they do, researching how their machine works: history, groups involved, alliances, and financing, having an exact notion of who you are dealing with.

By this bias, understand the seriousness of the polarization imposed by fundamentalisms and recompose their forces. Identify with whom one can dialogue to build an alternative field and with whom there is no dialogue.

The creation of a database with this information is fundamental to guide future actions of the OBFs and churches linked to ACT Alliance—some of them emerged from this FESUR research, others from research such as the Observatory of Sexuality and Politics (SPW) mentioned here, and also from possible research linked to universities and research institutes, with which partnerships around the subject are essential. At this point, one cannot fail to identify what are the historical continuities and what are the new elements.

This is a task to be carried out at the local level by the OBFs and churches linked to the ACT Alliance, in each country prioritized in the research, and should be shared by making regional interactions possible.

Considering a specific partnership with teachers in primary and secondary schools is relevant. Schools have been the target of fundamentalist actions, and the creation of moral panic affects the role of educators as “indoctrinators” and “sex perverts.”

What they call indoctrination is not the indoctrination the school has always done. The critical approach to racism, to sexism, to homophobia is that they are called indoctrination by fundamentalist groups. One should not abandon what is already done at school, on the contrary, dialogue with educators, and build common discourses around other horizons, not the generic discourse of democracy, of the role of institutions—it is very vague. Whoever criticizes schools does not know the schools and what is done there. Criticism of the “school which doctrines” cannot always be defensive, it needs to be proactive, bringing the community together with social movements, OBFs, and churches to understand the schools and also their old problems. Together with teachers, expose the fallacies that promote what is called “gender ideology” in dialogues with students and families (Rogério Junqueira, interview).

In the field of public policies and legislation, it is essential to establish partnerships with movements, articulations, and NGOs of lawyers and jurists who work for democracy and for guarantees and expansion of rights to carry out actions in parliaments. In this sense, based on the mapping of fundamentalist guidelines, to be indicated in the database, establish proactive strategies to face them with joint actions.

For that, do not fall into the trap of just reacting to speeches of moral panic and hate. Knowing the other discourse and rhetorical strategies and denouncing how the discourse operates. Flee from reductionism to link fundamentalisms to Pentecostals and pay attention to subjectivities, to their role as the basis for the social action of political-religious fundamentalisms. Crises and the feeling of helplessness are worked around. It is important to regain confidence in themselves and in the role of social movements and the credibility that social processes depend on human creativity.

3.5 Understanding more deeply the complexity of social demands

Building from this point a deeper understanding of what the specific demands of society are and the relationship of society’s demand to the religious. Understanding what conditions make fundamentalism possible and what creates space for insurgent movements and peaceful popular movements. The 2019 strikes in Colombia, the anti-system movements of Peru, and Argentina are experiences that indicate power and rescue what was lost, especially among young people, women, and indigenous people. It is necessary to work and make this power visible with the partnerships and joint actions indicated above.

To do this, reflect an understanding of how collective subjectivities and faith operate. Social movements and NGOs need to pay attention to the subjectivity of the groups with whom they work, which means listening to these groups, their needs, aspirations, desires. Listening processes can be established with group interviews and focus groups to hear these aspects and also what they expect from the actions of OBFs and churches.

In the attention to territories of poor communities, indigenous peoples and afro-descendants, where there is an intense presence of fundamentalist churches, it is important to consider the issues of drug trafficking and human trafficking as relevant demands for action. Similarly, the issues of corruption and impunity must be included among the social demands of the region.

With regard to gender demands, in particular that of sexual and reproductive rights and those of violence and rape that women, girls and the LGBTQI + community incessantly suffer, intense targets of political-religious fundamentalisms, the ACT Latin America and the Caribbean's initiative with the formation of the Gender Justice Community of Practice (CoP) must be reaffirmed, widely disseminated and contextualized in the OBFs' local actions.

3.6 Considering emotions and new languages in the organization of social life

In this regard, it is underlined that emotions and languages are an important topic. If many policies restricting rights are imposed by fear, pay attention to this, and run with languages that are sensitive to people's needs, valuing the power of the individual—not just emphasizing the collective. Communicate tenderness. The prevailing progressive language is very urban and very intellectual. Make use of a single language and create identification with people. People affectionate to fundamentalisms feel that those speeches are speaking directly to them. Learning from this discursive strategy is important in the development of new languages.

In the research, there were reports of social movements working with mystics (hybrid rites Christian, indigenous, Afro-descendants), which establish ways of spontaneous and emotional expression in their activities, which include expectations, dreams, and hopes, in circumstances of what was mentioned in the previous item. The value of these experiences and the importance of following them up was highlighted. It is recognized that mystics take time from discussions and work, but people involved value them. They can be transformed into the content of the work itself and not treated as a mandatory protocol.

3.7 Reviewing the secular State's defense discourse as opposition to fundamentalism

As identified in this FESUR research, it is characteristic of contemporary political-religious fundamentalisms to resort to a strategic secularization, which allows anti-gender forces related to religious groups to amplify their voices and eliminate inter-religious tensions. This strategy allows political-religious fundamentalisms to establish a secular discourse, anchored in science and human rights, making possible a broader space dispute with secular actors and states. Both Catholics and Evangelicals are increasingly participating in public space in countries prioritized in research, with a secularized discourse in defense of the lay State, through specialists in the fields of health, law, and education. This is strongly concretized in the creation of NGOs, by religious groups, which articulate themselves in regional networks, organize local actions and achieve representation in strategic regional spaces such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States. In these spaces, a discourse on rights is presented based on a restrictive interpretation of international human rights instruments as an expression of the secular State (Observatorio de Sexualidad y Política, 2020).

In this sense, appealing to the secular State as opposed to fundamentalist advances is counter-productive in the new profile of fundamentalist actions that are perceived (Andréa Silveira, interview). On the other hand, it is necessary to understand this strategy of fundamentalisms, so that defenders of human, sexual and reproductive rights elaborate effective response strategies. Among

them, it becomes relevant the organization of cycles of dialogues that involve movements for rights, OBFs, research groups, and centers of universities linked to the subject, to produce enlightening content in the form of objective publications in social media and meetings of formation for different types of public. The contents should deal with what separation between the State and religions means, the guarantee of the right to equality and religious freedom, the place of religious beliefs in public management, human rights, and the secular State.

It is also important to create a database on NGOs working in the public arena with scientific and secular discourse to defend the denial of rights, especially the articulations and leaderships that have worked in the OAS and the UN. Studying ways of deconstructing content that these people and groups expose, with effective communication strategies, but also anticipating contradictions.

3.8 Attention to youth

Giving more attention to the youth because it is a segment more open to other perspectives on society. The fact that they are networked all the time, experiencing other cultures, makes young people more open to the recognition of human, sexual and reproductive rights. Therefore, the fundamentalist message reaches them less and at the same time, they become a priority in fundamentalist actions, as described in this text.

3.9 Learning from indigenous and Afro-descendant communities

The reports stand out that in indigenous communities' resistance is due to attachment to the land, with the understanding that if the land disappears, the communities disappear. Christian theology of the new heaven and the new earth meets this original religiosity and encourages the occupation and defense of indigenous territories. It is indicated by the research participants that it is necessary to strengthen and give visibility to autonomous organizations of indigenous peoples, in their work for the right to self-determination, self-government, and new economies, which implies a long term to form generations. The same with Afro-descendant communities: working on the empowerment of ethnic populations, the cultivation of their traditions, and their relationship with territories.

These elements to be made visible can integrate the critical training programs indicated above and the production and dissemination of content through courses, debates, and placement on social media. It is also important to highlight the issue of food security concerning health, because of the insecurity imposed by agribusiness and the industrialization of food, giving way to the indigenous and Afro experience in training and related information.

3.10 Reformulate communication processes

It is essential to have a strong communication strategy when implementing responses to political-religious fundamentalisms. The shared action between ACT Alliance Global Gender Program, ACT Latin America and Caribbean Gender Justice Community of Practice (CoP) and the Latin American and Caribbean Ecumenical News Agency (ALC) is an example of communication that can be carried out in alliance.

The filler of digital media must be a privileged strategy, as it is for fundamentalist groups, as has been repeatedly pointed out in the various interviews and focus groups. To do so, it is necessary to overcome prejudices with the presence in digital media and occupy them, which means developing accessible, a popular language that blends orality with images, that attracts the attention of young people and responds to expectations for content from different target groups.

This means dispute for space in the public arena with narratives and leadership that gives prominence to progressive churches, combining traditional institutional forms of communication with new forms, especially digital ones. Public relations work should be considered among the actions that reach journalists from non-religious media to offer alternative voices to fundamentalisms (re-

ligious or not), to increase the visibility of South American contexts globally and also of the impacts fundamentalisms, and contribute to the expansion of networks and alliances already indicated in this item of the text.

It is necessary to establish training processes for the occupation of digital media by the different levels of church leaders and OBFs. Include in them training in communication and human rights, skills to achieve social influence (opinion leadership) and to effectively convene social, ecclesial and cultural actors.

In conclusion: the coronavirus and the potentialization of the crisis in democracy and human rights

This survey, conducted between February and June 2020, was developed in the context of COVID-19 in South America. Proposed methodologies had to be changed and interviews and focus groups, conducted virtually, were permeated by the feelings of the people involved regarding this humanitarian social crisis, in which the weaknesses of democracy and human rights were highlighted.

When WHO exposes COVID-19 as a global pandemic, it draws attention to the dramatic consequences of globalization, and the importance of cooperation and coordination of actions between countries. The fact is that the pandemic has challenged health systems around the world, exposing social exclusions, negligence, and inefficiencies. It is also a blow to economies, these same globalized economies, focused on the logic of the financial market and profit.

This is the case in South America, when the pandemic has highlighted several important elements in the crisis in which fundamentalisms weaken democracy and human rights: vulnerability of the minimal State, mega exploitation of labor, growth of gender violence in spaces of



social isolation, negligence with the elderly, increase in police violence, racism against indigenous and Afro-Latin populations. In the midst of all this is a youth in search of perspectives, jobs, and pro-rights. There is also a population for which religions give meaning and structure life. All these aspects were highlighted by participants in the research.

The ACT Alliance general secretary Rudelmar Bueno de Faria also referred to them, in his opening conference of the International Seminar Fundamentalisms, Democracy and Human Rights, held by FESUR, from 19 to 21 August 2020:

[The covid-19 pandemic] more openly revealed the dysfunctions of a “normality” that was already in crisis in most of our societies, especially the shocking inequalities like racism. The pandemic has also exacerbated threats related to the environment, shrinking space for civil society, polarization between families, groups and societies, populism and authoritarianism. We all know that climate change is a threat to life, to livelihoods and to all creation around the world. Climate change increases poverty and inequality and undermines the ability of communities, especially peasants and indigenous people, to enjoy a full life with dignity. It is much more difficult to remain silent and inactive in the face of this reality that threatens humanity and the planet.

In the midst of all this, as presented throughout this research report, there is also a population for which religions give meaning and structure life. The readings resulting from it need to take this into account when thinking about the future.



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Recolección de insumos

Input collection – interviews with experts (March, April, May) = 21

Argentina

Claudia Patricia Florentin, communicator, theologian, editor of ALC News Agency

Maximiliano Campana, Doctor of Law and Social Sciences, UNC Legal and Social Research Centre and CONICET

Néstor Oscar Míguez, Ph.D. in Theology and Diploma in Social and Political Anthropology, Retired from the former ISEDET University Institute

Washington Uranga, Ph.D. in Communication, University of Buenos Aires

Brazil

Andréa Silveira, Ph.D. in Religion Science, a researcher at REDUGE–Religion, Education and Gender Research Group of the Graduate Program in Religion Sciences of the Federal University of Juiz de Fora

Ivone Gebara, Doctor of Philosophy and Religious Sciences, retired Catholic theologian.

Joanildo Burity, Doctor of Political Science, Joaquim Nabuco Foundation

Lyndon de Araújo Santos, PhD in History, Federal University of Maranhão

Rogério Diniz Junqueira, Ph.D. in Sociology, Researcher at the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (Inep) and the Center for Advanced Multidisciplinary Studies of the University of Brasília (UnB)

Sandra Quintela, graduated in Economics, Postgraduate in Development Policies and Master in Production Engineering (COPPE-UFRJ), general coordinator of PACS (Institute of Alternative Policies for the SOUTHERN CONE), Jubilee of the South and Global Justice

Colombia

Carlos Enrique Angarita Sarmiento, Ph.D. in Theology, Faculty of Theology, Pontifical Javeriana University of Bogotá

Edgar Antonio López, Doctor of Theology, Pontifical Javeriana University

Marcela Sanchez Buitrago, social worker, Diversa Colombia

Olga Consuelo Vélez, Doctor of Theology.

William Mauricio Beltrán Cely, Sociologist, and Doctor in Latin American Studies, National University of Colombia

Sonia Patricia Larotta, Master in Geography.

Peru

Daniel Esteban Córdova Vásquez, Bachelor of Theology, Evangelical Theological Educational Association (AETE)

José Luis Pérez Guadalupe, Degree in Theology and Ph.D. in Political Science and Sociology, Graduate School of the University of the Pacific (Lima-Peru)

Mauro Alejandro Rivas, Theologian, Master in Practical Philosophy and Graduated in Law, Peace and Hope Association

Oscar Amat and León Perez, Sociologist of the Lutheran Church Cristo Rey

Rolando Pérez Vela, Master in Communication, Catholic University of Peru (PUC Lima) and Peace and Hope Association

Input Collection–Focus Groups (March, April, May) = 47

Argentina

Claudia Raquel Tron, pastor of the Evangelical Church of Valdese

Dennis Alan Smith, Presbyterian Church missionary (USA)

Estela Andersen, pastor of the Rio da Prata Evangelical Church

Marcelo Figueroa, priest of San Andrés Presbyterian Church

María del Pilar Cancelo, FORUM ACT Argentina for the Evangelical Service of the Diaconia (SEDI), Civil Association.

Brazil–Group 1

Alexandre P. Quintino, young man, Koinonia Ecumenical Presence and Service, Evangélicos for Diversity

Ana Paula Rosário, young, Instituto Odara (black women)

Sandro Luckmann, pastor, and educator of the Mission Council among the Indigenous Peoples (COMIN) of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession.

Ronaldo Santos, National Coordinator of the Articulation of Rural Black Quilombola Communities-CONAQ

Sirley Vieira, coordinator of Instituto Papai (gender and masculinities), coordinator of the Men's Gender Equality Network (RHEG), member of the UN Women's #HeForShe Campaign Advisory Committee

Viviane Hermida, advisor to the Ecumenical Service Coordination (EESC), feminist movement.

Brazil-Group 2

Ana Gualberto, Koinonia Ecumenical Presence and Service (gender and quilombola areas) and Candomblé

Beto de Jesus, educator and theologian of the Anglican Church, an activist of the Brazilian Association of Gays, Lesbians, and Transsexuals (ABGLT), director of the AIDS Health Assistance Foundation (AHF) Brazil

Lorena Araújo, IMENA (Black Women's Institute of Amapá) and Articulation of Young Black Feminists

Mauro Nunes, Candomblé priest, religious freedom activist, for LGBTQI + and health causes

Roberto Antônio Liebgott, coordinator of the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), Southern Region, Catholic Church

Sônia Correia, the founder of SOS-Corpo, coordinates the Sexuality Policy Watch (SPW) in Brazil, a project based at the Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association (Abia)

Colombia-National Women's Network Group

Beatrice H. Quintero

Martha Lisbeth Alfonso Jurado

Norma Lucia Bermudez Gomez

Susana Mejía González

Colombia-Youth Group (mediated by CREAS-Regional Ecumenical Advisory and Service Center)

Adriana Milena Gutiérrez López, CRU (Campus Crusade for Christ International)

Armando Suarez Molina, Church of God in Colombia

Katherin Bolívar Castañeda, CREAS

Lizeth Durán, DiPaz-Inter-ecclesial Dialogue for Peace

Santiago Orozco Ramírez, Foundation for Integral Human Development (FUNDESHI)

Colombia-DiPaz Group-Inter-ecclesial Dialogue for Peace

Adelaida Jimenez Cortes, DiPaz

Jeferson Rodríguez Galeano, National Coordinator of Alliances with the Interreligious Sector of World Vision Colombia

Piedad, Jenny Neme Neiva, DiPaz

Jesus Alberto Franco Giraldo, Inter-Church Commission for Justice and Peace and Network of Churches and Mining

Lizeth Durán, DiPaz

Sara Cristina Lara González, Gender Group–Dipaz

Carolina Viviana Machuca Martinez, DiPaz

Peru

Adita Torres Lescano, pastor of the Lutheran Church of Peru

Aurora Luna, Alfalit in Peru

Edelvis Rodriguez Cadillo, Lutheran Church of Christ the King

Gerson Zamora Santiago, Faculty of Theology and Religion (AETE)

Isabel Del Pilar López Meza, Association of Evangelical University Groups of Peru (AGEUP)

Piera Gutierrez Huanca, Peace and Hope Association

Rocio Palomino Bonilla, Diakonia/Peru

Ruth Esther Alvarado Yparraguirre, Peace and Hope Association

Group interview to deepen the content of the effects of fundamentalisms on traditional indigenous and Afro-descendant communities

Adriel Ruiz, Afrodescendant Studies, Colombia

Eleuterio Melián, an Afro-descendant leader from the San Felix de Santiago del Estero community (Argentinean Chaco), Argentina

Jesus Alfonso Flórez Lopes, Dean of Humanities and Arts, Universidad Autónoma de Occidente, indigenous and afro-latin studies, Colombia

Jorge Arboccó, Peace and Hope Association, Peru, indigenous cause

Leo Suarez, United Mission Board staff, indigenous and technical Eco-spirituality, Argentina

Luisa Bustamante (Nachi), Afro-descendant activist, Peru

Group Interview to discuss content emphasized in the research–Community of Practice (CoP) of ACT Gender Justice in Latin America and the Caribbean = 06

Ana Gualberto, Koinonia's Ecumenical Presence and Service advisor for work with quilombola communities and in the gender area

Claudia Gómez, regional gender coordinator Diakonia Latin America, Colombia

Denise Chávez, responsible for gender in Diakonia, Peru

Laura Chacón, moderator of the ACT Gender Justice CoP

Pilar Cancelo, director of the Evangelical Service of Diakonia, Argentina.

Renate Gierus, theologian and pastor of the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession, and coordinator of COMIN-FLD, Brazil.



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