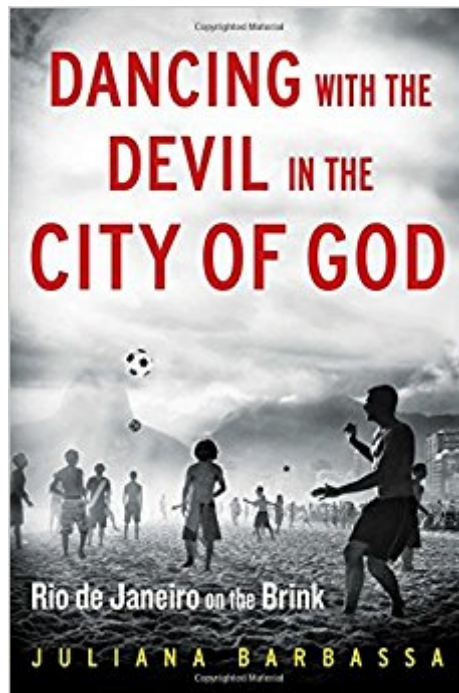




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# Dancing With The Devil In The City Of God: Rio De Janeiro On The Brink



## Synopsis

In the tradition of *Detroit: An American Autopsy* and *Maximum City* comes a deeply reported and beautifully written biography of the seductive and chaotic city of Rio de Janeiro from prizewinning journalist and Brazilian native Juliana Barbassa. Juliana Barbassa moved a great deal throughout her life, but Rio was always home. After twenty-one years abroad, she returned to find the city that once ravaged by inflation, drug wars, corrupt leaders, and dying neighborhoods was now on the precipice of a major change. Rio has always aspired to the pantheon of global capitals, and under the spotlight of the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games it seems that its moment has come. But in order to prepare itself for the world stage, Rio must vanquish the entrenched problems that Barbassa recalls from her childhood. Turning this beautiful but deeply flawed place into a predictable, pristine showcase of the best that Brazil has to offer in just a few years is a tall order—and with the whole world watching, the stakes couldn't be higher. With a cast of larger-than-life characters who are driving this fast-moving juggernaut or who risk getting caught in its gears, this kaleidoscopic portrait of Rio introduces the reader to the people who make up this city of extremes, revealing their aspirations and their grit, their violence, their hungers and their splendor, and shedding light on the future of this city they are building together. *Dancing with the Devil in the City of God* is an insider perspective into a city on the brink from a native daughter whose life, hopes, and fortunes are entwined with those of the city she portrays.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[A] fascinating urban chronicle...[readers] will come away with a sense of having been there."

(Publishers Weekly)"Frank, fluid dispatches...Energetic, intrepid reporting by an insider."(Kirkus Reviews) "Her interviews with police, prostitutes, drug dealers, ecologists, businesspeople, academics, movers and shakers, and the moved and shaken offer a fascinating look at the people who live in and aspire to change one of the world's most impressive cities." (Booklist) "In a book that's akin to Charlie LeDuff's *Detriot*, Barbassa combines history and personal interviews in an informative and engaging work, showing a nation whose people desire a better country but are at odds with the government and even themselves at the best way to achieve that result." (Library Journal) A powerful work of reportage. Eloquent, heartfelt, and thorough, Barbassa is a brilliant guide to the underside of Brazil's showcase city. If you want to understand twenty-first-century Rio de Janeiro, read this book. (Alex Bellos, author of *Futebol: the Brazilian Way of Life*) Returning to Rio after years abroad, Juliana Barbassa takes the reader on a journey of urban exploration beyond the tourist clichés of Ipanema and Carnival. Her book, *Dancing with the Devil in the City of God*, seamlessly melds deep reporting with nuanced memoir, providing an insider's guide to a global city of immense energy, appetites, heartbreak and danger. To understand Rio's prospects for the 21st century, come with Barbassa on her voyage of inquiry and rediscovery. It's a trip worth taking. I savored every moment. (Ambassador Derek Shearer, Director of the McKinnon Center for Global Affairs, Occidental College, Los Angeles) Juliana Barbassa has written a beautiful yet unflinching meditation on one of the world's great cities during a moment of profound change. Her book is a moving examination of the immense charms, staccato violence and unfulfilled promise of the marvelous city and of the heart of modern Brazil. (Michael Deibert, author of *In the Shadow of Saint Death: The Gulf Cartel and the Price of America's Drug War in Mexico*) A timely tour-de-force! Drawing on the city's history, geography, social structure, culture, political intrigues, and economic disparities, Barbassa has written a multidisciplinary masterpiece. This splendid and accessible narrative is must reading not just for the journalists, spectators, and athletes who will be in Rio for the Olympic Games, but for anyone who has visited Rio or not and has been caught up in the magnetic attraction of this spectacular and complicated city. (Dr. Robert Maguire, Director of the Brazil Initiative at the Elliot School of International Affairs, George Washington University) I became unexpectedly choked up not once but twice in the introduction alone and found myself sucked into the most in-depth, personal and thorough unfolding of Brazil's history on the brink of its economic rebirth. Whether as an anticipatory read before Brazil hosts the Olympics in 2016 or to better grasp a country so rich, complex and divided by extreme dualities of lifestyles, this is a book that you will be unable to set down. Juliana Barbassa brings us both a journalistic and

introspective vantage point of a country in the midst of a metamorphose with the unique angle of a native born Brazilian returning home forever a foreigner after living abroad for much of her life with a well-worn passport. Contemporarily relevant, uniquely compelling, exquisitely written and brilliantly delivered, I anticipate many readers, like myself, will find our passport soon bearing the stamp of Brazil thanks to Barbassa. (Jessica Sweedler DeHart, BookPeople of Moscow (Moscow, Idaho))

Rio de Janeiro is one of the world's most exotic cities and much in the news over the past few years with the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympics upcoming in 2016. Journalist and Brazilian native Juliana Barbassa presents a complex portrait of a city, country and society attempting to present the best possible face to the world while having to confront numerous problems in its own society, particularly a criminal level that is almost beyond belief. Her description of this massive change being attempted from on high and the disruption to an entrenched society is informative, instructive and mesmerizing as she strips bare the glitter and glitz of the beaches and gives us the true Rio. (Bill Cusumano, Square Books (Oxford, MS))

Is Brazil ready to take its place as the 6th largest world economy and is Rio ready to host the 2016 summer Olympics? Will the monumental social and political changes currently underway last beyond the final medal ceremony? Barbassa's well written and informative expose is a fascinating look at Rio's history and attempts to transform itself into a safe, democratic and ultimately modern city. (Phyllis Spinale, Wellesley Books)

"In Julia Barbassa's fascinating new book, easy assumptions are peeled back to expose a place struggling to define its present and its future. . . . [S]he is both a knowledgeable insider and a fiercely critical outsider. . . . Brazil is indeed on the brink, on a precipice ready to soar or fall, or perhaps, as Barbassa suggests, fated to remain forever poised, waiting for liftoff. (Lourdes Garcia-Navarro, NPR News)

Juliana Barbassa was born in Brazil, but she had a nomadic life between her home country and Iraq, Malta, Libya, Spain, France, and the United States before settling in Switzerland. Barbassa began her career with the Dallas Observer, where she won a Katie Journalism Award in 1999. She joined the Associated Press in 2003, and after two more awards from the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the APME, she returned to Brazil in 2010 as the AP's Rio de Janeiro correspondent. *Dancing with the Devil in the City of God* is her first book.

A delightful piece of reportage from one of the most stunning, frustrating, and complicated cities in the Americas. Barbassa artfully takes the reader through a rollicking ride of prostitutes, crocodiles, tycoons, crappy apartment buildings, the World Cup fiasco and calls into question the dominant

narratives of Rio's resurrection into a world class city. A must read for anyone that wants to know what is happening in Rio as it prepares again for another blast from the IOC.

Here is a rich panorama of a city of legendary beauty and its even grittier underside. As someone who lives in Brazil and knows Rio, I learned much about how the city got to be the way it is, and how it's evolving now, as it prepares to host the Olympics in 2016. From the history of the city's drug gangs to the woeful state of its water system. There's a fascinating tension here between the city's hopes for itself and troubled attempts to realize those hopes, and by weaving in her own family history, the author makes the stakes of the city's transformation personal, too. Highly recommended.

Reviewed by Jim Platt I congratulate Juliana Barbassa, the author of the impressive book about Rio de Janeiro, a beautiful city and host to many World events. The book presents the significant problems Rio has due to its growth and the unfulfilled political promises for improvements in the city to accommodate this growth. The book is particularly important at this time when the World will be watching the Olympics and Paralympics later this year in Brazil. The book focuses on the dark realities that exist in Rio, affecting especially the lives of the more than one million of its six million citizens who live in the 1000 hillside favelas or shanty communities around the city. These realities included gang violence, lack of environmental cleanup and community infrastructure, air pollution, prostitution, and moving people out of favelas for important urban projects such as the Olympics. After working as an AP journalist in the U.S., in 2010, the Brazilian born Ms. Barbassa moved to her native city Rio where she investigated these realities continuing as an AP journalist. The book is well written with many details about her investigations, making it fast flowing and a fascinating read. It reminded me of my own experiences having visited Rio many times since my days as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the 1960s in Brazil, including Carnival, and, most recently, the World Cup with my family. Ms. Barbassa discusses the lack of follow through by political leaders on many commitments made for living improvements, especially for the poor in the favelas. As an AP journalist, she met with key individuals seeking to understand the problems and what these persons are doing to solve these problems. One big example of an unfulfilled commitment was cleaning up and stopping the dumping of sewage into Guanabara Bay. This commitment helped Brazil win its bid for the Olympics and it would benefit the well being of the residents, but will not likely be met. Another major example was the loss of credibility of the government when it failed to provide the emergency support promised to the towns of Nova Friburgo, Petrópolis, and Teresópolis. In

2011, these towns in the mountains outside of Rio suffered mudslides caused by heavy rains that wiped out many homes and left 1,000 people dead, including some who were never found. Since Rio's world famous Carnival, with its fabulous creativity, was not covered in the book, I am curious what Carnival's impacts are on the city and its citizens. Perhaps Ms. Barbassa could write a sequel to this book that discusses these impacts, and how the Olympics affected Rio and Brazil, including the impressions of the attendees. Such a follow-on book could also provide a progress report on solving the problems she describes in her very outstanding first book.

My first (and to date, last) visit to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil was in February 2008 for Carnaval. It was a magical time and I was enthralled by this beachside city. I still have some great memories of the "Cidade Maravilhosa" even today. So I was glad when I discovered 'Dancing With The Devil in the City of God' and to read more about this city and how it has changed since my visit there almost a decade ago. This book was a welcome addition to my library. This book weaves a rich tapestry of Rio de Janeiro today. What I presumed was a book purely about Rio's politics turned out to be anything but. Ms. Barbassa invites you to delve into Rio's history, its decades of corruption and its struggles and joys in hosting the World Cup and the Olympics. There are stories contained in this book that range in tone from tragic to pure adoration, as the author recounts many anecdotes from her own childhood memories of Rio to her more recent experiences living there as an adult. Her interviews with various "Cariocas" (a term used for the residents of Rio de Janeiro) shed some light on everything from politics to human rights and environmentalism, helping the reader to understand the joys and trials that face not only Rio's population, but also Brazil as a whole. The author doesn't attempt to cast down Rio or Brazil in a bad or a good light, but on how all the forces and events that led up to the present have helped how the world sees Brazil on an international level. An open-minded and welcoming country in many ways, but also a country plagued by such tragedies as the violence brought forth because of the drug and gang wars. The author paints a vivid image of Rio's past and present in a way that moves you and makes you think. As someone who has been there, and reading about its problems like pollution and crime, I hope all the best for this city, as well as for the nation of Brazil as a whole.

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