

**Forum: Citizen Forum on Inequalities****Theme: How to reduce inequalities at different scales?****Name of citizen: Tanya Michelly**

Marital status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Married/in a relationship</li><li>○ <b>Single</b></li><li>○ With children, if so, how many: 2</li></ul>	Level of education <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Primary</b></li><li>○ Secondary</li><li>○ University</li></ul>
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**1. How does the theme of inequalities concern you?**

My name is Tanya Michelly. I am 43 years old, I live in a favela in Rio de Janeiro, and I work in the informal sector. I came here not as a politician nor as a scholar, but as a common citizen whose life has been influenced by inequality. For me, inequality is more than just a term; it is the difference between eating and going hungry, sending my children to school or keeping them at home, and feeling safe or terrified. It's my daily reality.

Every morning, I get up early and start work, but no matter how many hours I put in, I am invisible in the system. Because I work in the informal sector, I do not have a contract, social protection, health insurance, or a pension. When I am sick, I must pick between paying for medicine versus food. When I grow old, all I will have to rely on is the expectation that my children will support me. This is not just my tale, but the tale of millions of Brazilians.

However, inequality extends beyond the present. The conditions that exist today are the result of history. Brazil's colonial history left significant scars: resources were plundered from the land and its people, while wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few. Monarchy and feudalism established tight hierarchies in which landowners thrived and workers received little. These institutions did not evaporate; rather, they evolved into current divisions that influence where I live, how I work, and the future my children may or may not have.

When globalisation and urbanisation arrived, they brought promise for improvement. But for neighbourhoods like mine, they usually meant exclusion. Factories closed as jobs were relocated abroad, forcing many of us into the informal economy. Cities grew, but so did favelas, because those who were left behind still needed to live somewhere. While globalisation brought the world closer together, it also increased the gap between those who gain from international markets and those who struggle on the outskirts.

Today, digitalisation feeds this cycle. We are told that the future belongs to those with digital abilities, but in my village, access to reliable internet is a luxury, and computers are precious. My children are clever and eager to study, yet they are already at a disadvantage when it comes to school assignments that require web access. Without equal access to technology, the digital divide contributes to inequality.

Living in a favela also implies surviving with limited resources. Access to clean water, sanitation, healthcare, and secure shelter is not promised. Public hospitals are overcrowded and schools frequently lack teachers and supplies. When resources are few, inequality becomes more pronounced because those with wealth can always obtain better services privately, but the poor must rely on what little remains.

Politics worsens our challenges. Brazil's political instability has frequently placed regular folks in the conflict. Promises are made but rarely maintained, and each change in government brings new uncertainty. Extremism and corruption deepen the divide, since policies are designed for the privileged rather than those in most need. Even battles in distant nations have an impact on us, as global markets move, food and fuel costs rise, and our unstable circumstances are pushed closer to collapse.

## **2. What do you suggest at your level?**

These harsh realities are heavy, but I'm not asking for sympathy. I'm standing here to seek acknowledgement. Workers in the informal sector are not invisible; we are moms, fathers, and citizens. We need decent salaries, secure jobs, and the same safeguards that others have. We deserve schools that prepare our children for the future, hospitals that treat us with respect, and safe communities.

Inequality is frequently portrayed as unavoidable, as if it were part of the natural order. But I don't believe it. Inequality is rooted in history, politics, and global systems. And, because it was developed by humans, it can be altered by humans. If the international community takes inequality seriously—if governments invest in education, healthcare, and decent jobs, reduce the digital divide, and provide the resources and opportunities that communities like mine require—progress is feasible.

I urge you to remember that behind every number is a person like me, a family like mine, and a child with ambitions that deserve to be met. Policies discussed in this room are more than just words on paper. They can signify the difference between despair and optimism, exclusion and opportunity, and silence and a voice.

Inequality has existed for generations, but it does not have to determine our future if we have the courage and dedication. I am honoured to speak here today, not only for myself, but also for millions of others whose voices are rarely heard. Together, we can establish a society where dignity is not a privilege but a right, where no one is left behind, and where everybody benefits in the growth.