

From Car Wash to Bolsonaro: Law and Lawyers in Brazil's Illiberal Turn (2014–2018)

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ABSTRACT

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This presentation reports on studies about the work Brazilian public prosecutors did in the lava jato anticorruption initiative. These prosecutors were widely celebrated as champions of political liberalism and the *rule of law*. Based on an interpretive approach to law and society research and analyses of press interviews and social media exchanges involving the lava jato prosecutors, I demonstrate they contributed to produce and disseminate an illiberal political grammar and culture that was instrumental to Brazil's far-right turn. Power concentration and violations of the law were justified in the name of the *greater good of fighting corruption*, while calls, by the prosecutors, for *society's participation in this fight* degenerated into attacks on democratic institutions and the Supreme Court. Overall, my studies call for more nuanced and less idealistic analyses of the role of lawyers in promoting political liberalism.

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