

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

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TO CITE

De Sa E Silva, F. (2022). From Car Wash to Bolsonaro: Law and Lawyers in Brazil's Illiberal Turn (2014–2018). In *Proceedings of the Paris Institute for Advanced Study* (Vol. 18). https://paris.pias.science/article/INTEL_2022_07_from-car-wash-to-bolsonaro-law-and-lawyers-in-brazils-illiberal-turn-20142018

PUBLICATION DATE

02/06/2022

ABSTRACT

Intellectuals against liberal democracy. Academia, media, and culture, Paris IAS, 2-3 June 2022 - Panel 2 - Illiberal intellectuals figures

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 participatio_n 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.

