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## A Difficult Start To The New Year

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**At the beginning of 2019 Fortaleza sadly experienced an unprecedented level of violence with organized gangs responding to the new government's promise to crack down on crime.**

There have been over 150 arson attacks bringing everyday life to a standstill and spreading fear throughout the city. This included the bombing of a major bridge.

We have talked about the influence of gangs on the community surrounding CBC before. This violence demonstrates just how widely their control and influence has been, particu-

larly in relation to the prison system. The new government has blocked mobile phone signals in the prison and ended a policy which kept prisoners from different gangs in separate areas. Where organized crime had been allowed to operate and exert control, the State of Ceará is now taking over. The result is this rebellion against public services and private property.

These troubles have disrupted the return to work of our staff after the Christmas break for our usual month of planning. We are glad that everyone is safe and staff have been planning and developing their vision for the new year from home.

Our students have been on vacation for the month of January which is summer break in Fortaleza. Many of them find this a difficult time though as they are forced to stay at home with little to do and too many dangers to venture outside.

Please pray for our staff and kids as we carefully monitor the situation and do our best to get back to work and prepare for the coming academic year.



## A Chicago Based Opera Singer at CBC

**Laura has known about CBC for most of her life, her family has been supporting the ministry ever since she can remember. However, CBC became something much more than a distant mission when Laura recently visited Fortaleza. Here's her story.**

I've been trying to process my trip to Fortaleza, Brazil and I've barely even scratched the surface. It feels like something in my heart has awakened. I was touched beyond understanding by the incredible people at Channel to Brazil. Our family has known of CBC since its formation over 30 years ago, but I've only now been able to actually visit the school. Marc and Ruth have created a safe haven for the beautiful children from the Favelas (slums) in the beautiful, but hurting city of Fortaleza. CBC is a school, which supplements the poor education they are getting, by giving them another half day of school, in the morning or afternoon, depending on when they attend public school. Along with Math, Portuguese, Reading, Computers, gym, chapel, etc, they have an incredible arts program. They learn musical instruments, singing, dance, and theater. I have NEVER seen children more passionate while performing.

These children live in conditions and situations I cannot even begin to comprehend. We weren't even allowed to walk outside the school gates, due to the danger it would pose to us, the organization, and possibly the children. They come from broken, impoverished homes. Many are being raised by drug dealers, prostitutes, or simply by older siblings, as their parents have left or been killed. They are constantly being told they are nothing by the world around them, often including their own families. CBC gives them a safe place to learn, be encouraged, discover their talents, skills, and inherent value, and to be deeply loved by the incredible staff of teacher, administrators, and anyone lucky enough to visit for a time. And these children fully understand the gift they are being given. 12 year olds explained to me how incredibly lucky, grateful, and happy they are to be at CBC, to be getting an education, and to feel that they can change their lives. The 13/14 year olds and their families expressed how deeply sad they were that it was their last year. CBC is a pure light in their lives, and these kids see and understand that.

I taught a class on opera and have never seen children more excited at the sound of classical singing! They sat enraptured by everything I shared and showed them about opera. They couldn't believe how loud a voice could be and they were utterly shocked that anyone from Brazil could even be an opera singer. I taught them how to sing "Figaro! Figaro Figaro Figaro Figaro" and they ran around singing it for the rest of the week. I was able to connect with the arts and music students a lot during my time. There is INCREDIBLE talent in those kids. They play violin, guitar, bass, keyboard, drums, and there are some exciting voices in the bunch! I was able to spend the week playing with them, loving them, teaching them, and speaking encouragement to them. In a world where the career options most available to them are drugs and prostitution, CBC is doing the impossible: showing these kids that they can graduate, go to college, and make their lives better.

They are also teaching them that God loves them. I heard stories directly from the parents at the lunch we helped with, how their children brought God's love into the home and saved marriages, changed the hearts of their drug-dealing fathers, and brought hope into the home for the first time.

I'm attempting to readjust to being back and am fighting the feelings of how inconsequential and selfish life here feels. I know my life and work here is important, but the impact of waking up and spending the day actively loving those children felt so big and real and important. I can just pray that I keep my eyes open and continue to remember those face and hugs as I walk forward through my life. I will be returning as often as I can and will work hard to help CBC get the funds they need to continue their work.

I'm in constant prayer about how I can help more and have some big and exciting ideas. But for now, I just want to share my incredible experience and let everyone know that CBC is over there, doing this beautiful and important work. Your giving has an enormous impact every month, please keep it up. My life has been deeply touched and I can't wait to go back!