Yet despite initial positive press, and significant work on the part of the city administration to engender a positive image in the face of international public opinion, there is growing debate about whether the city’s boom can actually serve to reduce the city’s well-known inequality. Known as the "Marvellous City" for its geologic beauty, Rio is also known as the "Divided City" by locals, who often live side-by-side rich and poor, yet face significant disparities and historic segregation in access to public services.

How will Rio’s "coming of age" unfold? What will the fate be of the city’s world-famous favela communities, numbered at over 1000 today? How is the city currently handling these communities? What can we foresee? Will Rio take advantage of this unique opportunity to grow and consolidate its economy without compromising its unique cultural heritage, and in a way that reduces inequality?
During November and December 2011, Dr. Theresa Williamson, founder and executive director of Catalytic Communities, will be conducting a tour at universities in the Northeast and California, offering presentations along three themes:

- Pre-Olympic Rio de Janeiro: The Dynamics of Urban Change
- Expulsion in Democracy: Favelas, Eviction & Gentrification in Rio de Janeiro
- Non-attachment as an Entrepreneurship Strategy: Catalytic Communities in Rio de Janeiro

Each talk will offer a contextual overview of the city, its recent history, and that of the favelas. It will then target itself towards one of these three topics. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further details regarding a specific talk subject.

Few are in Williamson's position to offer a community perspective to the current transformations unfolding in Rio -- a perspective rarely available at a distance.
More about Theresa Williamson
Founder and Executive Director, Catalytic Communities

Featured this year in O Globo and Marie Claire, invited to speak at UN Habitat this past May, and recently quoted in Al Jazeera, The Independent and cyberpresse.ca, Catalytic Communities (CatComm) founder Theresa Williamson has become an outspoken and respected advocate and informant on behalf of Rio de Janeiro’s favelas in the face of current fast-paced transformations.

In May 2004 Theresa received her Ph.D. from the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania. Entitled Catalytic Communities: The Birth of a Dot Org, her dissertation won the 2005 Gill-Chin Lim Award for Best Dissertation on International Planning and was one of three finalists for the 2004 Barclay Gibbs Jones Award for the Best Dissertation in Planning. She has published articles from this dissertation and related research in Progressive Planning, The Journal of Urban Technology, and Cidadania.org. Theresa received her undergraduate degree in Biological Anthropology from Swarthmore College. Raised in the Washington, DC area, she is a dual Brazilian and British citizen and lives in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

More about Catalytic Communities

Since 2000, Catalytic Communities (CatComm) has provided capacity-building and technology training, media exposure, meeting spaces, and global networks of support to over 1500 leaders from over 250 low-income communities across Rio de Janeiro. As a result, the tide is beginning to turn on the stigma these communities historically face. They are increasingly recognized as creative, self-built neighborhoods that comprise an important niche within the urban fabric, one worthy of recognition, respect and investment.

Winner of a 2006 Tech Award from the Tech Museum of Innovation in Silicon Valley, and recognized for its 'actionable ideas' by the UN, CatComm makes strategic use of media and networks to link grassroots community groups in Rio de Janeiro with networks of exchange and support. In the lead-up to the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics, CatComm is the only organization in Rio working at the intersection of community development, social media, and global networks. Our current work with social media, journalism and video trainings for community organizers are building capacity across the city’s favelas to communicate and attract visibility to community actions and perspectives in the lead-up to these mega-events. CatComm’s latest project, RioOnWatch, is Rio’s only English-language community news site. Through a partnership with Adobe, and another with human rights organization Witness.org, CatComm’s current efforts focus on training community members to become citizen-journalists to document change in their neighborhoods as the World Cup and Olympics approach.
Updated Tour Calendar

11/27 Living Room Talk (Washington, DC)
11/28 Wellesley College (Wellesley, MA)
11/29 American University (Washington, DC)
11/30 Georgetown University (Washington, DC)
12/1 Villanova University (Villanova, PA)
12/2 New York University (New York, NY)
12/2 Living Room Talk (New York, NY)
12/5 University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, PA)
12/5 Swarthmore College (Swarthmore, PA)
12/6 Chicago Freedom School (Chicago, IL)
12/8 Stanford University (Palo Alto, CA)
12/8 The Hoop Hosts CatComm at the Hub (San Francisco, CA)

For Further Information or to book, please contact:
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